

**Partnership Agreement between the
Department of Education (DE) and the
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
(CCMS)**

Approved 23 October 2025

**Version 7.0 (updated 24 September 2026
following light-touch review)**

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
1. The Partnership Agreement.....	3
CCMS Establishment and Purpose	6
2. Statutory Purpose and Strategic Objectives	6
CCMS Governance Arrangements.....	8
3. Organisational Status	8
4. Governance Framework	8
5. The CCMS Board ('Council') and its Committees	9
6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	11
7. CCMS Chairperson.....	12
8. CCMS Chief Executive	13
Role of the Department of Education	16
9. Partnership Working with CCMS	16
10. Lead Departmental Official	17
11. Annual Engagement Plan	18
12. Departmental Accounting Officer	20
13. Attendance at Public Accounts Committee	21
Assurance Framework	22
14. Autonomy and Proportionality.....	22
15. Board Effectiveness.....	23
16. Council Member Appraisals	24
17. Internal Audit Assurance.....	24
18. Externally Audited Annual Report and Accounts	26
Signatories	28
Annex 1 - Applicable Legislation	29
Annex 2 – Annual Engagement Plan.....	30
Annex 3 - Delegations	41

Annex 4 – Illustrative System of Assurance	44
Annex 5 – Concerns/Complaints in respect of Council members.....	45
Annex 6 - Applicable Guidance	47
Annex 7 – Role of the Minister	49
Annex 8 – Partnerships between Departments and Arm’s Length Bodies: NI Code of Good Practice	50

Introduction

1. The Partnership Agreement

- 1.1 This document sets out the partnership arrangements between *the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS)* and the *Department of Education (DE)*. In particular, it explains the overall governance framework within which CCMS operates, including the framework through which the necessary assurances are provided to stakeholders. Roles/responsibilities of partners within the overall governance framework are also outlined.
- 1.2 The partnership is based on a mutual understanding of strategic aims and objectives; clear accountability; and a recognition of the distinct roles each party contributes. Underpinning the arrangements are the principles set out in the [NI Code of Good Practice 'Partnerships between Departments and Arm's-Length Bodies'](#) which should be read in conjunction with this document. The principles which are laid out in the Code are:

LEADERSHIP
<i>Partnerships work well when Departments and Arm's Length Bodies demonstrate good leadership to achieve a shared vision and effective delivery of public services. Strong leadership will provide inspiration, instil confidence and trust and empower their respective teams to deliver good outcomes for citizens.</i>
PURPOSE
<i>Partnerships work well when the purpose, objectives and roles of Arm's Length Bodies and the sponsor department are clear, mutually understood and reviewed on a regular basis. There needs to be absolute clarity about lines of accountability and responsibility between departments and Arm's Length Bodies. In exercising statutory functions Arm's Length Bodies need to have clarity about how their purpose and objectives align with those of departments.</i>

ASSURANCE
<i>Partnerships work well when departments adopt a proportionate approach to assurance, based on Arm's Length Bodies' purpose and a mutual understanding of risk. Arm's Length Bodies should have robust governance arrangements in place and in turn departments should give Arm's Length Bodies the autonomy to deliver effectively. Management information should be what is needed to enable departments and Arm's Length Bodies to provide assurance and assess performance.</i>
VALUE
<i>Partnerships work well when departments and Arm's Length Bodies share knowledge, skills and experience in order to enhance their impact and delivery. Arm's Length Bodies are able to contribute to policy making and departmental priorities. There is a focus on innovation, and on how departments and Arm's Length Bodies work together to deliver the most effective policies and services for its customers.</i>
ENGAGEMENT
<i>Partnerships work well when relationships between departments and Arm's Length Bodies are open, honest, constructive and based on trust. There is mutual understanding about each other's objectives and clear expectations about the terms of engagement.</i>

A full copy of the NI Code can be found at [Annex 8](#).

1.3 This document should also be read in conjunction with guidance on proportionate autonomy which provides an outline of the principles and characteristics for proportionate autonomy (see [DAO \(DoF\) 06/19](#)). Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance to be established between CCMS and DE and this is reflected in this agreement (see section 11 and Annex 2).

1.4 DE and CCMS are committed to:

- Working together within distinct roles and responsibilities;
- Maintaining focus on successful delivery of Programme for Government outcomes and Ministerial priorities (see also paras 2.6 and 2.7);
- Maintaining open and honest communication and dialogue;
- Keeping each other informed of any issues and concerns, and of emerging areas of risk, in a timely manner and at the earliest opportunity;
- Supporting and challenging each other on developing policy and delivery [when developing policy this may cut across more than one department];

- Seeking to resolve issues quickly and constructively; and
- Acting at all times in the public interest, in line with the values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality, and in the best interests of children and young people.

1.5 The effectiveness of the partnership and the associated Engagement Plan will be considered each year by the Department and CCMS, in order to assess whether the partnership is operating as intended and to identify any emerging issues/opportunities for enhancement. This can be carried out as part of existing governance arrangements. The Partnership Agreement document itself will be reviewed formally at least once every three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose and up-to-date in terms of current governance frameworks. The formal review will be proportionate to CCMS's size and overall responsibilities and will be published on departmental and ALB websites as soon as practicable following completion.

1.6 A copy of this agreement has been placed in the Assembly Library¹ and is available on the DE and CCMS websites.

¹See [Guidance on the Laying of Papers \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk) and <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/statutory-rules-and-papers-laid-and-presented/>

CCMS Establishment and Purpose

2. Statutory Purpose and Strategic Objectives

2.1 CCMS is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established as a body corporate under The Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 (the 1989 Order). The constitution of the Council of CCMS is set out in Schedule 8 to the 1989 Order. CCMS does not carry out its functions on behalf of the Crown. For national accounts purposes CCMS is classified to the central government sector.

2.2 References to CCMS include, (where they exist), all its subsidiaries and joint ventures that are classified to the public sector for national accounts purposes. If such a subsidiary or joint venture is created, there shall be a document setting out the arrangements between it and CCMS.

2.3 The 1989 Order gives CCMS the statutory functions, duties and powers to:

- advise the Department, the Education Authority (EA) or other bodies on matters relating to Catholic maintained schools;
- promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the trustees of Catholic maintained schools, the planning of the effective provision of Catholic maintained schools;
- promote the effective management and control of Catholic maintained schools by the Board of Governors of such schools;
- employ all such teachers as are required on the staff of Catholic maintained schools and, with the approval of the Department, the employment of supply teachers;
- (with the approval of the Department), provide or secure the provision of such advice and information to the trustees, Boards of Governors, Principals and staff of Catholic maintained schools as appears to CCMS to be appropriate in connection with its duties in relation to the management of schools;
- exercise such other functions as are conferred on it by legislation; and
- consult with the Trustees, Boards of Governors and Principals of Catholic maintained schools about the exercise by CCMS of its functions.

- 2.4 In the discharge of its functions CCMS may require the managers of a Catholic maintained school to make such reports and returns, and give such information, to CCMS as it may reasonably require.
- 2.5 The Minister of Education is answerable to the Assembly for the overall performance and delivery of both DE and CCMS. CCMS will therefore support the Minister, and by extension Departmental officials, in relation to the Minister's priorities.
- 2.6 The Executive's outcome-based approach to delivery recognises the importance of arm's length bodies and departments working collaboratively and together in a joined up approach to improve overall outcomes and results.
- 2.7 To that end there is strategic alignment between the aims and objectives of DE and CCMS, and expected outcomes for children and young people - approved by the Minister in CCMS's Corporate Plan and Business Plan, aligned with Ministerial and DE's strategic priorities and the wider Executive Programme for Government. Annual engagement between DE and CCMS will take place as set out in the annual Engagement Plan (see Annex 2).
- 2.8 CCMS's core aim is to raise standards across the Catholic maintained sector, and it is committed to improving outcomes and opportunities for children and young people through the following strategic priorities:
- **EMPOWERING** effective leadership and management of our schools.
 - **ENHANCING** the sustainability of our family of schools and the estate.
 - **ADVOCATING** for all children and young people, and the Catholic maintained sector.
 - **COLLABORATING** with others to shape and improve educational provision.
 - **SUSTAINING** critical service delivery and good corporate governance.

CCMS Governance Arrangements

3. Organisational Status

- 3.1 CCMS is a legal entity in its own right, employing its own staff and operating at arm's-length from the Department. As a legal entity it must comply with all associated legislation including legislation relating to its employer status.

4. Governance Framework

- 4.1 CCMS has an established Corporate Governance Framework which reflects all relevant good practice guidance. The framework ([available here](#)) includes the governance structures established within CCMS and the internal control and risk management arrangements in place. This includes its Board ('Council') and Committee Structure. The Department is satisfied with the agreed framework.
- 4.2 An account of this is included in CCMS's annual Governance Statement together with the CCMS Council's assessment of its compliance with the extant [Corporate Governance Code of Good Practice \(NI\)](#) available on the Department of Finance (DoF) website. Any departure from the Corporate Governance Code must be explained in the Governance Statement.
- 4.3 CCMS is required to follow the principles, rules, guidance and advice in [Managing Public Money Northern Ireland](#). CCMS should at all times adhere to the Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy and information should be handled in accordance with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office and in compliance with GDPR. A list of other applicable guidance and instructions which CCMS is required to follow is set out in Annex 6.
- 4.4 Good governance should also include positive stakeholder engagement, the building of positive relationships and a listening and learning culture.

5. The CCMS Board ('Council') and its Committees

- 5.1 CCMS is led by a Board, (hereafter referred to as the 'Council'), which is appointed in accordance with paragraph 2 of [Schedule 8](#) to the 1989 Order.
- 5.2 Membership of the Council consists of (i) the Archbishop of Armagh and the Bishops of Clogher, Derry, Down and Connor, Dromore and Kilmore, (or their appointed representatives); (ii) persons appointed by the aforementioned groups; (iii) representatives of parents and assistant teachers, and (iv) persons appointed by the Minister of Education.
- 5.3 Where appointments are made by the Minister for Education, the appointment process complies with the [Code of Practice on Public Appointments for Northern Ireland](#). The terms of appointment of Council members are normally for 4 years or such other term as may be specified by the Minister/DE.
- 5.4 As Public Appointees, Council members are office holders rather than employees, they are not subject to employee terms and conditions. Council appraisal arrangements are set out in Section 16 and matters for consideration in dealing with concerns/complaints in respect of Council members are provided in Annex 5.
- 5.5 The CCMS Corporate Governance Framework provides further detail on the functions, roles and responsibilities of the organisation, the Council and its sub-Committees (including the five Diocesan Education Committees), and should align closely with this Partnership Agreement.
- 5.6 The purpose of the Council of CCMS is to provide effective leadership and strategic direction to the organisation and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the Education Minister are implemented. It is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has effective and proportionate governance arrangements in place and an internal control framework which allow risks to be effectively identified and managed. The Council will set the culture and values of the

organisation and set the tone for the organisation's engagement with stakeholders and customers.

- 5.7 The Council is responsible for holding the Chief Executive to account for the management of the organisation and the delivery of agreed plans and outcomes. The Council should also support the Chief Executive as appropriate in the exercise of their duties.
- 5.8 Council members act solely in the interests of CCMS and must not use the Council as a platform to champion their own interests or pursue personal agendas. They occupy a position of trust and their standards of action and behaviour must be exemplary and in line with the seven principles of public life (Nolan principles – as set out in [DAO 03/19 \(updated\)](#)). CCMS has a Council Code of Conduct (Appendix 2 of the Corporate Governance Framework) and there are mechanisms in place to deal with any Council disputes/conflicts to ensure they do not become wider issues that impact on the effectiveness of the Council. A Council Register of Interests is maintained, kept up to date and is publicly available to help provide transparency and promote public confidence in CCMS.
- 5.9 Communication and relationships within the Council are underpinned by a spirit of trust and professional respect. The Council recognises that using consensus to avoid conflict or encouraging members to consistently express similar views or consider only a few alternative views does not encourage constructive debate and does not give rise to an effective Council dynamic. The principle of collective decision-making and corporate responsibility should be upheld at all times. Once the Board has decided, each Board member must support that decision.
- 5.10 It is for the Council to decide what information it needs, and in what format, for its meetings/effective operation. If the Council is not confident that it is being fully informed about the organisation this will be addressed by the Chair of the Council as the Council cannot be effective with out-of-date or only partial knowledge.

5.11 In order to fulfil their duties, Council members must undertake initial training, and regular ongoing training and development. Review of Council/Board skills and development will be a key part of the annual review of Board effectiveness.

5.12 DE should be provided with copies of minutes of all meetings of the Council and its committees as soon as possible, and no later than 5 days after being agreed by the Council as the accurate and final record. Agreed arrangements in respect of Council meetings and committees may include attendance by Departmental representatives in an observer capacity. A DE observer will attend all ARAC meetings (see 6.3 below).

6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

6.1 A further important aspect of CCMS's governance framework is its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, established in line with the extant [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook](#) (NI).

6.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's purpose/role is to support the Accounting Officer and CCMS Council on governance issues. In line with the handbook the Audit and Risk Assurance Committees focuses on:

- assurance arrangements over governance; financial reporting; annual reports and accounts, including the Governance Statement; and
- ensuring there is an adequate and effective risk management and assurance framework in place.

6.3 CCMS and DE have agreed arrangements in respect of Audit and Risk Assurance Committees which include:

- attendance by departmental representative(s) (usually the Head of Education Governance Team) in an observer capacity at CCMS's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings;
- Access to CCMS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee papers and minutes;
- Any input required from CCMS's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to the departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

- 6.4 Full compliance with the [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook \(NI\)](#) is an essential requirement. In the event of significant non-compliance with the handbook's five good practice principles (or other non-compliance) discussion will be required with the Department and a full explanation provided in the annual Governance Statement.

7. CCMS Chairperson

- 7.1 The post of Chairperson (hereafter referred to as 'Chair') of the Council is filled from within the existing members of the Council. The arrangements for this are set out within the Council's Standing Orders.

- 7.2 The Chair is responsible to the Minister of Education and by extension to the Department for setting the agenda and managing the Council to enable collaborative and robust discussion of issues. The Chair's role is to develop and motivate the Council and ensure effective relationships in order that the Council can work collaboratively to reach a consensus on decisions. To achieve this, they should ensure:

- CCMS's policies and actions support the Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government targets and the policies and priorities of the Minister of Education and that CCMS's affairs are conducted with regularity and probity and deliver value for money;
- The Council has an appropriate balance and diversity of skills appropriate to its business;
- Council members are fully briefed on terms of appointment, duties, rights and responsibilities;
- Council members receive and maintain appropriate training;
- The Minister, and by extension the Department, is advised of CCMS's needs when vacancies on the Council arise;
- There is a Corporate Governance Framework in place setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Council in line with relevant guidance;

- This includes (Appendix 2) a code of conduct for Council members, consistent with relevant guidance.

7.3 The role also requires the establishment of an effective working relationship with the Chief Executive that is simultaneously collaborative and challenging. It is important that the Chair and Chief Executive act in accordance with their distinct roles and responsibilities as laid out in Managing Public Money NI and their appointment letters.

7.4 The Chair has a presence in the organisation and cultivates external relationships which provide useful links for the organisation while being mindful of overstepping boundaries and becoming too involved in day to day operations or executive activities.

8. CCMS Chief Executive

8.1 The role of the CCMS Chief Executive is to provide strategic and operational leadership for CCMS. The Chief Executive is responsible for all executive management matters affecting the organisation and for leadership of the executive management team.

8.2 The Chief Executive is designated as CCMS Accounting Officer by the departmental Accounting Officer (see section 12). As Accounting Officer they are responsible for safeguarding the public funds in their charge and ensuring they are applied only to the purposes for which they were voted and more generally for efficient and economical administration.

8.3 The Chief Executive is accountable to the CCMS Council for the organisation's performance and contribution to delivery of outcomes and targets and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Council and its Committees. The Chief Executive is not a member of the Council but with the agreement of the Council, may attend Council meetings and meetings of its committees. The Chief Executive maintains a dialogue with the Chair on the important strategic issues facing the organisation and for proposing Council agendas to the Chair to

reflect these. The Chief Executive ensures effective communication with stakeholders and communication on this to the Council. The Chief Executive also ensures that the Chair is alerted to forthcoming complex, contentious or sensitive issues, including risks affecting the organisation.

- 8.4 The Chief Executive acts as a role model to other executives by exhibiting open support for the Chair and Council members and the contribution they make. The Chair and Chief Executive have agreed how they will work together in practice, understanding and respecting each other's role, including the Chief Executive's responsibility as Accounting Officer.
- 8.5 Further detail on the role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive are as laid out in Managing Public Money NI and their Accounting Officer appointment letter – see [FD \(DFP\) 09/09](#).

The Chief Executive's role as Principal Officer for Ombudsman Cases

- 8.6 The Chief Executive is the Principal Officer for handling cases involving the NI Public Sector Ombudsman. They shall advise the departmental Accounting Officer of any complaints about CCMS accepted by the Ombudsman for investigation, and about the proposed response to any subsequent recommendations from the Ombudsman.

The Chief Executive's responsibilities for staffing matters

- 8.7 The Chief Executive is responsible for oversight of staffing, and for determining the staffing structure to meet operational needs and to carry out its statutory functions. In doing this the Chief Executive will have regard to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, the need for forward planning within the parameters of any running cost limits or efficiency measures that may be set by the Department.
- 8.8 Subject to any specific conditions set by the Department, and to sufficient budget cover being available to ensure that the creation of any additional posts

does not incur forward commitments which will exceed the ability to pay for them, the Chief Executive has the authority to reorganise / set staffing structures below The Senior Leadership Team (Grade 7) level to best meet business need. At Grade 7 level and above Departmental approval is required to reorganise/set staffing structures. In managing the CCMS staffing structure the Chief Executive will ensure consistency with established employment practice and legislation.

- 8.9 The Chief Executive is responsible for employee and industrial relations within CCMS. The Chief Executive is committed to fostering good employee and industrial relations as an important aid to achievement of CCMS objectives and will ensure effective communication and consultation with all staff and their recognised trade union representatives.

Role of the Department of Education

9. Partnership Working with CCMS

- 9.1 DE and CCMS have distinct roles in the planning and delivery of education services while both working to achieve the strategic priorities of the Education Minister. The partnership between DE and CCMS is open, honest, constructive and based on trust – in line with Public Bodies: A Guide for NI Departments (See [Annex 8](#)). There is mutual understanding of each other's objectives and clear expectations on the terms of engagement.
- 9.2 In exercising its functions CCMS has absolute clarity on how its purpose and objectives align with those of DE. The Department will continue to have responsibility for developing and reviewing educational policy (in line with Ministerial direction) whilst CCMS will have responsibility for implementing policy and delivering services to children and young people in line with Departmental policy. There is also a shared understanding of the risks that may impact on each other, and these are reflected in respective Risk Registers.
- 9.3 There is a regular exchange of skills and experience between DE and CCMS and where possible joint programme/project delivery boards/ arrangements. CCMS may also be involved as a partner in policy/strategy development and provides advice on policy implementation/ the impact of policies in practice.
- 9.4 The Department of Finance (DoF) has established, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly, a delegated authority framework which sets out the circumstances where prior DoF approval is required before expenditure can be occurred or commitments entered into. The DE Accounting Officer has established an internal framework of delegated authority for the Department and its ALBs which apply to CCMS. This has been provided to CCMS and is available with other specific approval requirements established in respect of CCMS at Annex 3.

- 9.5 Once CCMS's budget has been approved by the Minister [and subject to any restrictions imposed by statute] CCMS shall have authority to incur expenditure approved in the budget without further reference to the Department. Inclusion of any planned and approved expenditure in the budget shall not however remove the need to seek formal departmental approval where proposed expenditure is outside the delegated limits (as laid out in Annex 3) or is for new schemes not previously agreed. Nor does it negate the need to follow due processes laid out in guidance contained in Managing Public Money NI and Better Business Cases NI.

10. Lead Departmental Official

- 10.1 DE has appointed the Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance to manage the relationship with CCMS and ensure effective partnership working. Engagement between the Department and CCMS will be co-ordinated, collaborative and consistent. A clear sense of collaboration and partnership will be communicated to staff in both the Department and CCMS in order to promote mutual understanding and support.
- 10.2 The Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance, supported by Education Governance Team, will take the lead on performance, risk management, governance and communication issues with CCMS; the Director of Finance will take the lead on finance-related issues. The Director of Education Workforce Development will take the lead on workforce planning issues, terms and conditions of service and public sector pay policy and pensions. The Director of Sustainable Schools Policy and Planning Directorate will take the lead on area planning issues.
- 10.3 The relevant DE policy directors are the policy leads for any other specific policy and delivery issues relating to CCMS's business and will have a clear understanding of CCMS's responsibilities for policy implementation, including those matters out with CCMS's duties and/or funding model, and operational delivery; along with the relevant audiences/stakeholders involved. It is the

responsibility of each DE policy director to directly engage with their CCMS counterpart in relation to policy development and delivery issues.

10.4 The relevant DE policy director will ensure that where there are senior departmental staff changes, time is taken to ensure they have a full understanding of CCMS's business and challenges. CCMS will take the equivalent approach where there are senior officer changes within its organisation.

10.5 The lead senior official(s) will ensure that where there are departmental staff changes, time is taken to ensure they have a full understanding of CCMS's business and challenges.

11. Annual Engagement Plan

11.1 The Department and CCMS will agree an engagement plan before the start of each business year. The Annual Engagement Plan ([Annex 2](#)) will set out the timing and nature of engagement between CCMS and the Department. The engagement plan will be specific to CCMS and should not stray into operational oversight.

11.2 Engagement between the Department's lead official/their teams and CCMS will be centred on partnership working, understanding of shared risks and working together on business developments that align with policy objectives.

11.3 In line with relevant guidance², CCMS will work in collaboration and partnership with the Department to prepare and agree corporate and business plans which should be outcomes focused, aligned with Programme for Government, Ministerial and Departmental priorities and CCMS plans. There should be an appropriate high-level strategic alignment between DE and CCMS corporate/business plans. Once Plans have been approved by the Department it will be the CCMS Council that primarily holds the Chief Executive to account for

² [Guidance](#) issued by TEO on NICS Work Programme which includes guidance on business planning for an outcomes-based PfG/ODP

delivery and performance, although the Department also has a monitoring role and holds CCMS (as a Corporate Body) accountable for its performance. The Department will engage with CCMS on areas of strategic interest, linking departmental policy and CCMS delivery of policy intent; **particularly where this will impact upon CCMS and/or Catholic Maintained schools.**

- 11.4 In order to monitor progress against its business plan, CCMS will prepare and submit to the Department a monitoring report three times a year (Mid-Year, a “light-touch” Quarter 3 and End-Year). This will set out any proposed amendments to the Business Plan together with the latest information and/or data to reflect progression towards the achievement of expected outcomes and any other matters as directed by the Department.
- 11.5 The Annual Engagement Plan will also reference the agreed management and financial information to be shared over the course of a year. The aim will be to ensure clear understanding of why information is necessary and how it will be used. Where the same, or similar information is required for internal governance information requirements will be aligned so that a single report can be used for both purposes. In addition, the engagement plan should consider opportunities for learning and development, growth and actions which could help achieve better outcomes.
- 11.6 The primary assurance mechanism will be through the formal Governance and Accountability (GAR) meetings, which are chaired by the Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance (or designated deputy where required) and once per year by the Minister. The purpose of the GAR is to seek assurance on CCMS’s systems of internal control. The GAR provides an opportunity to recognise achievements and progress and also seek assurance on corrective action where plans are not being achieved. As well as the GAR chaired by the Minister, assurances on delivery against Departmental/Ministerial/PfG priorities are supplemented through engagement between the relevant DE policy area and CCMS (as detailed in the annual engagement plan in Annex 2).

12. Departmental Accounting Officer

- 12.1 The departmental Accounting Officer is accountable to the NI Assembly for the issue of grant in aid to CCMS. They have designated the Chief Executive of CCMS as CCMS Accounting Officer and respective responsibilities of the departmental Accounting Officer and the CCMS Accounting Officer are set out in [Chapter 3](#) of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland. The departmental Accounting Officer may withdraw the CCMS Accounting Officer designation if they conclude that the CCMS Accounting Officer is no longer a fit person to carry out the responsibilities of an Accounting Officer or that it is otherwise in the public interest that the designation be withdrawn. In such circumstances the Council of CCMS will be given a full account of the reasons for withdrawal and a chance to make representations. Withdrawal of CCMS Accounting Officer status would bring into question employment as Chief Executive and the Chair should engage with the Department should such circumstances arise.
- 12.2 As outlined in section 8, the CCMS Chief Executive is accountable to the Council of CCMS for their stewardship of CCMS. This includes advising the Council on matters of financial propriety, regularity, prudent and economical administration, efficiency and effectiveness. The Chief Executive also reports formally, in conjunction with the Chairperson, to the Departmental Accounting Officer at GAR and other meetings as required by DE.
- 12.3 The departmental Accounting Officer must be informed in the event that the judgement of the CCMS Accounting Officer (on matters for which they are responsible) is over-ridden by the Council of CCMS. The CCMS Accounting Officer must also take action if the Council of CCMS is contemplating a course that would infringe the requirement for financial propriety, regularity, prudent and economical administration, efficiency or effectiveness. In all other regards, the departmental Accounting Officer has no day to day involvement with CCMS or its' Chief Executive.

12.4 In line with DoF requirements, the CCMS Accounting Officer will provide a declaration of fitness to act as Accounting Officer to the departmental Accounting Officer as part of the annual Governance Statement.

13. Attendance at Public Accounts Committee

13.1 The CCMS Chief Executive/Accounting Officer may be summoned to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to give evidence on the discharge of their responsibilities as Accounting Officer (as laid out in their [Accounting Officer appointment letter](#)) on issues arising from the C&AG's studies or reports following the annual audit of accounts. See [DAO \(DoF\) 03/21](#) for guidance.

13.2 The Chair may also, on occasion, be called to give evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on such relevant issues arising within the C&AG's studies or reports, in relation to the role and actions taken by the Council, where appropriate.

13.3 In addition, the DE Accounting Officer may be summoned to appear before the Public Accounts Committee to give evidence on the discharge of their responsibilities as departmental Accounting Officer with overarching responsibility for CCMS. In such circumstances, the departmental accounting Officer may therefore expect to be questioned on their responsibilities to ensure that:

- there is a clear strategic control framework for the ALB;
- sufficient and appropriate management and financial controls are in place to safeguard public funds;
- the nominated Accounting Officer is fit to discharge his or her responsibilities;
- there are suitable internal audit arrangements;
- accounts are prepared in accordance with the relevant legislation and any accounting direction; and
- intervention is made, where necessary, in situations where the ALB Accounting Officer's advice on transactions in relation to regularity, propriety or value for money is overruled by the body's Council or its Chair.

Assurance Framework

14. Autonomy and Proportionality

- 14.1 DE will ensure that CCMS has the proportionate autonomy to deliver effectively, recognising its status as a separate legal entity which has its own Board ('Council') and governance arrangements. Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance established between CCMS and DE and is reflected in this agreement.
- 14.2 A proportionate approach to assurance will be taken based on CCMS's overall purpose, business and budget and a mutual understanding of risk. The approach will include an agreed process through which the CCMS Accounting Officer provides written assurance to the Department that the public funds and organisational assets for which they are personally responsible are safeguarded, have been managed with propriety and regularity, and use of public funds represents value for money.
- 14.3 Recognising the governance arrangements in place within the organisation, the CCMS Accounting Officer will arrange for their written assurance statements (Mid-year and End-year Governance Statements) to be discussed at the CCMS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and presented to the CCMS Council prior to submission to the Department, where possible. If not possible, or practicable, the Chair of the CCMS Council should have sight of the assurance statement, prior to being submitted to the Department.
- 14.4 For the end-year Governance Statement, the Chair of CCMS will provide written confirmation that the CCMS Accounting Officer's formal assurance has been considered by the Council and is reflective of CCMS's current position.
- 14.5 In addition to the CCMS Accounting Officer's written assurance, the Department will take assurance from the following key aspects of CCMS's own governance framework:
- Annual Review of Board ('Council') Effectiveness;

- Completion of Council member Appraisals which confirm Council member effectiveness;
- Internal Audit assurance and External Quality Assessment of the Internal Audit function;
- Externally audited Annual Report and Accounts, reviewed/considered by the CCMS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

15. Board Effectiveness

15.1 The Chair of CCMS will ensure that CCMS Council undertakes an annual review of Board Effectiveness³ which encompasses committees established by the Council.

15.2 The Chair will discuss the outcome of the annual review of Board Effectiveness with the lead official to ensure a partnership approach to any improvements identified. This will inform the annual programme of Council training/development and discussions in respect of Council composition for any new appointments and succession planning.

15.3 In line with any parameters set out in founding (or other) legislation, the Chair in conjunction with the Department, and Ministers where appropriate, will consider the size and composition of the Council of CCMS and its Committees, proportionate to the size and complexity of CCMS and keep this under review.

15.4 In addition to the annual review of Board Effectiveness, CCMS will undertake an externally facilitated review of Board effectiveness at least once every three years covering the performance of the Council, its Committees and individual Council members. The Chair will liaise with the Department to agree the arrangements for identifying and appointing a suitably skilled facilitator for the external review (this can be a peer review, and should be proportionate) and will share the findings/outcome report with the Department on completion of the review.

³ NIAO [Board Effectiveness – A good Practice Guide](#): June 2022

16. Council Member Appraisals

- 16.1 The Chair of CCMS will conduct an annual appraisal in respect of each Council member which will also inform the annual programme of Board training/development. The Chair will engage with the Chief Executive/lead official as appropriate on improvements identified through the appraisal process and the annual training/development programme.
- 16.2 DE only require appraisals for DE-appointed members to be shared with the Department; however, it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that annual evaluations take place for all Council members. CCMS should therefore have arrangements in place to conduct assessments for non-DE appointed members (whether this be through the Chair, or a designated Chairperson of a Committee of the Council, as appropriate).
- 16.3 Appraisals of the Chair are not formally required by DE, as this position is not a Ministerial appointment; however, the Chair will be invited to complete a self-assessment and invited to meet the Deputy Secretary of Investment, Infrastructure & Area Planning on an annual basis to discuss the work of the Council. If requested, the Minister can also arrange to meet the CCMS Chair to discuss the performance of CCMS, its current and future activities, and any policy developments and reports relevant to performance and activities.

17. Internal Audit Assurance

- 17.1 CCMS is required to establish and maintain arrangements for an internal audit function that operates in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards ([GIAS](#)). DE must be consulted and be satisfied with the competence and qualifications of the Head of Internal Audit are in accordance with GIAS.
- 17.2 In the event that the internal audit function is contracted out CCMS shall ensure DE is satisfied that the contract specification for the internal audit service meets the requirements of GIAS each time the contract is tendered.

- 17.3 CCMS will provide its 3-5 year internal audit strategy, periodic audit plans and annual audit report, including the Head of Internal Audit's opinion on risk management, control and governance to the Department (via Education Governance Team). CCMS will ensure the DE's internal audit team have complete right of access to all relevant records. This applies whether the internal audit function is provided in-house or is contracted out.
- 17.4 CCMS will ensure regular, periodic self-assessments of the internal audit function in line with GIAS and will share these with the Department. CCMS will also liaise with the Department on the External Quality Assessment (EQA) of the internal audit function which (in line with GIAS) is required to be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified independent assessor – Corporate Services & Governance Directorate in DE should be consulted in relation to the Terms of Reference for the EQA, and a copy of the EQA report provided to them once completed.
- 17.5 CCMS will alert the Department to any less than satisfactory audit reports at the earliest opportunity on an ongoing basis. CCMS will also alert the Department to a less than satisfactory annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit at the earliest opportunity. CCMS and the Department will then engage closely on actions required to address the less than satisfactory opinion in order to move CCMS to a satisfactory position as soon as possible.
- 17.6 The Department will take assurance from the fact that CCMS has met the requirements of GIAS and has a satisfactory annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit as part of its overall assurance assessment. The Department's Internal Audit Unit may, in exceptional circumstances, undertake reviews within CCMS at the request of the Department.
- 17.7 The CCMS Accounting Officer has a responsibility to bring to the immediate attention of the Department's Principal Accounting Office any significant issue including those relating to serious financial concerns, systems weaknesses or regularity and propriety.

17.8 CCMS will publish and maintain up-to-date policies and guidance on [Anti-Fraud](#), [Complaints Handling](#) and Whistle blowing etc. on its website.

18. Externally Audited Annual Report and Accounts

18.1 CCMS is required to prepare an Annual Report and Accounts in line with the Government Financial Reporting Manual ([FReM](#)) issued by DoF and the specific Accounts Direction issued by DE, and in accordance with the deadlines specified.

18.2 The Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) will arrange to audit CCMS's annual accounts and will issue an independent opinion on the accounts. The C&AG will liaise with CCMS on whether the NIAO or a commercial auditor will undertake the audit on his behalf. The final decision rests with the C&AG. The C&AG passes the accounts to DE who shall lay them before the NI Assembly together with CCMS's annual report in accordance with the relevant DoF guidance.

18.3 The annual report will include the statement of accounts for that year along with the corresponding report of the C&AG, a report on the exercise of its functions for that year, and such other information as DE may require. CCMS must submit to DE a draft of the annual report by such date as DE may direct, to enable DE to lay the report before the Assembly in a timely manner.

18.4 The C&AG will also provide a Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) to CCMS which will be shared with the Department.

18.5 CCMS will alert the Department to any likely qualification of the accounts at the earliest opportunity. In the event of a qualified audit opinion or significant issues reported in the RTTCWG the Department will engage with CCMS on actions required to address the qualification/significant issues.

18.6 The Department will take assurance from the external audit process and an unqualified position as part of its overall assurance assessment.

18.7 The C&AG may carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which CCMS has used its resources in discharging its functions. The C&AG may also carry out thematic examinations that encompass the functions of CCMS.

18.8 For the purpose of audit and any other examinations, the C&AG has statutory access to documents as provided for under Articles 3 and 4 of the [Audit and Accountability \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2003](#).

18.9 Where making payment of a grant, or drawing up a contract, CCMS should ensure that it includes a clause which makes the grant or contract conditional upon the recipient or contractor providing access to the C&AG in relation to documents relevant to the transaction. Where subcontractors are likely to be involved, it should also be made clear that the requirements extend to them.

Signatories

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the Department of Education agree to work in partnership with each other in line with the NI Code of Good Practice **‘Partnerships between Departments and Arm’s-Length Bodies’** and the arrangements set out in this Agreement.



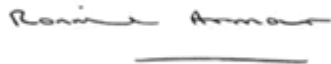
Signed (Chair of CCMS)

Date **15 October 2025**



Signed (CCMS Chief Executive)

Date **15 October 2025**



Signed (Permanent Secretary, Department of Education)

Date **23 October 2025**

Annex 1 - Applicable Legislation

List the founding legislation and other key statutes which provide CCMS with its statutory functions, duties and powers.

Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989

The founding legislation of the Council are set out in Article 141 of the 1989 Education Reform (NI) Order ([Part IX](#)). Its functions are set out in Articles 142-146 and Schedule 8 and are as follows:

- to employ all such teachers as are required on the staffs of Catholic Maintained schools;
- to advise the Department or a board on such matters relating to Catholic Maintained schools as the Department or board may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit;
- to promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the trustees of Catholic Maintained schools, the planning of the effective provision of such schools;
- to promote the effective management and control of Catholic Maintained Schools by the boards of governors of such schools;
- to provide or secure, with the approval of the Department, the provision of such advice and information to the trustees, boards of governors, principal and staff of Catholic Maintained schools as appears to the Council to be appropriate in connection with the Council's duty; and
- to exercise such other functions as are conferred on it by the Education Orders.

[The Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1986](#)

[Education \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#)

[The Education and Libraries \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2003](#)

[The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2005](#)

[Shared Education Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)

[Identity and Language \(Northern Ireland\) Act 2022](#)

[Public Services Ombudsman Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)

[Rural Needs Act \(NI\) 2016](#)

Annex 2 – Annual Engagement Plan

CCMS Glossary

Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Chief Finance Officer	CFO
Director of Education	DoE
Director of HR and Governance	DHRG
Director of Strategic Planning and School Provision	DSPSP
Senior Education Adviser	SEA
Senior HR Adviser	SHRA
Senior Leadership Team	SLT
Programme Manager	PM

DE Glossary

Corporate Services and Education Governance Directorate	CSEGD
Economic Advisory Unit	EAU
Education Governance Team	EGT
Education Workforce Development	EWD
Financial Monitoring Team	FMT
Financial Reporting Team	FRT
Investment and Infrastructure Directorate	IID
Qualifications, 14-19 Strategy, Statistics and Research	QSSR
Raising Aspirations and Supporting Learning	RASL
SEN Strategic Policy & Legislation Directorate	SSPLD
SEN Reform and Inclusion Development Directorate	SRIDD
Sustainable Schools Policy & Planning Directorate	SSPPD
Strule Shared Education Programme	SSEP
Teacher Development	TDD
Teaching and Learning Excellence Directorate	TLED

Engagement Plan 2026/27

1. Policy Development and Delivery / Areas of Joint Working

Add details of the planned engagement between the ALB and the Department in relation to development and monitoring of existing and new areas of policy.

Add details of any interchange opportunities, and/or joint programme/project delivery boards

Note – the frequency/timing of engagement set below are approximate – the relevant DE and CCMS official(s) will liaise where the frequency/timing needs to change during the course of the year.

Policy Area	Frequency/Timing	Lead DE and CCMS Officials
TransformED Programme		
TransformED Programme	Quarterly TransformED Programme Board and regular engagement as required	Deputy Secretary for Education Policy and Delivery (Chair); Director of Curriculum Reform and TransformED Implementation; Director of QSSR; Director of TDD; Director of TLED; Director of RASL; CCMS – Chief Executive
School Improvement	Termly System Oversight and Assurance Group meetings, regular engagement on follow-up to inspection and ad hoc reporting on new red BRAG issues	TLE Director (Chair), RASL Director, Deputy Director of Governance, SEN Director(s), and Head of School Improvement Team - DE Director of Education (DoE) – CCMS
Raising standards in schools		
Entitlement Framework	Annually - (For EF compliance rates for CCMS schools)	Head of 14-19 Strategy Team - DE CCMS – Senior Education Advisor (SEA)
Leading Together for Excellence: A TransformED NI Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning	As required	Director of Promoting Learning & Collaboration, Director of Teacher Development – DE CCMS – SEA
HR & Workforce		
(a) Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC)	As required	Deputy Secretary, Resources & Reform Director of EWD and Head of Teacher Workforce Team
(b) TNC Working Groups		Director of EWD and/or Head of Teacher Workforce Team - DE

		(a) CEO, Director of HR, Workforce Planning & Governance (DHRWG) - CCMS (b) SHRA – CCMS
Management Side	Monthly	Director of EWD and Head of Teacher Workforce Team – DE DHRWG and DOE – CCMS
Joint Secretaries	Monthly	Head of Teacher Workforce Team – DE DHRWG – CCMS
Area Planning		
(a) Steering Group (APSG) (b) Working Group (APWG)	(a) and (b) Quarterly	(a-c) Director of SSPPD and Teams - DE DE Head of SEN and Continuum of Special Education Provision Development (CSEPD) (a) DSPSP– CCMS (b) PM – CCMS (c) AP Officers – CCMS
Building & Development		
Capital Programme Board	Bimonthly	Director of IID and Head of Major Capital Implementation Team – DE DSPSP – CCMS PM – CCMS
School Enhancement Programme (SEP) (a) Programme Board (b) SEP project boards	(a) Quarterly (b) Quarterly	(a) IID Director and Head of SEP Team – DE; DSPSP – CCMS (b) Head of SEP team – DE; PM – CCMS
Major and Minor Capital Projects	Quarterly oversight meeting. School specific meetings and visits as required	Head of Major Capital Implementation Team and Head of Estate Operations Team – DE PM – CCMS
School Governance		
School Governance / Reconstitution	As required	Director of CSEGD / Deputy Director of Governance / Head of Governor Policy & Appointments Team – DE DHRWG & SHRA – CCMS
LMS/School Funding	As required	Head of Financial Monitoring Team – DE DHRWG – CCMS
Shared Education		
Strule Programme Board SEC Project Boards	Quarterly	Permanent Secretary (chair) and Deputy Secretary, Sustainability and Infrastructure Group (SRO) - DE Chief Executive – CCMS

Mainstreaming Shared Education Oversight Group	CCMS rep on Group which meets biannually	Head of Shared Education & Community Relations Team – DE DoE – CCMS
Special Educational Needs (SEN)		
SEN Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan Child Centred Inclusive Capacity Building Programme	As required	Director of SEN – DE DoE – CCMS
SEN Placement Strategic Group	As required	Director of SEN – DE DoE/SEA – CCMS
Irish Medium and Integrated Education		
Irish Medium Education (i) Encourage/Facilitate development of Integrated and Irish Medium Education (ii) IM Education Strategy	As required IM strategy monthly meetings	Head of Irish Medium Team /Head of Integrated Education Team – DE DSPSP/SEA – CCMS
Other / Cross-cutting issues		
Cross-organisational Oversight Group (EA-led)	Bimonthly	Various DE Directors with responsibility for education policy and workforce issues DoE – CCMS

2. Strategic Planning		
Activity	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
Business Plan (BP) (a) Commissioning, development, and approval of BP for forthcoming financial year (b) Monitoring of BP	(a) Commissioning of BP – Oct/Nov First Draft BP –January Final Draft BP approved – by end March (b) Quarter 2 submitted by October Quarter 3 (light touch report) submitted by January End-year submitted by April	Head of EGT – DE CEO and DHRWG– CCMS
DE Annual Asset Management Plan	CCMS input – early October	Asset Management Team, IID – DE CFO– CCMS

4. Board Appointments

Add details of any engagement related to Public Appointment exercises

Activity	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
Appointment of members to the Council and DECs.	In advance of terms expiring or otherwise as required.	Head of EGT – DE Chair / Chair of Finance and Personnel Committee (FPC), CEO & DHRWG – CCMS
(a) DE appointments <i>Note: details of timings etc. will reflect any DE appointments planned for that year.</i>	Competition to launch late August 2026 with new appointments expected to be made in January 2026.	Head of EGT – DE Chairperson (or their nominee) & DHRWG – CCMS [Chairpersons of Committees, as appropriate]
(b) Parent, Teacher, & Trustee representative appointments for membership on the Council and DECs	Details of timings etc. will reflect any timescales for reconstitution. Parent & Teacher reps were appointed in January 2021, and due again in January 2025. Application for new reps is due for completion in July 2025. Trustees appointed November 2024 – next appointments due November 2028	EGT - DE Chair of FPC & DHRWG – CCMS
(c) Board Member Assessments (Only required by DE for members appointed by the Department; however, CCMS encouraged, as best practice, to complete appraisals for all members)	Commissioned April (annually) with returns due June	Head of EGT – DE Chair, Chairs of Sub-committees & DHRWG - CCMS
(d) Skills Audit of CCMS Board	Annually commissioned (usually June)	Head of EGT - DE Chair & DHRWG - CCMS
(e) Review of Board Effectiveness	Annual review (usually summer) An externally facilitated review (at least once every three years)	Head of EGT – DE Chair, Chairs of sub-committees & CEO - CCMS

(f) Chairperson's Appraisal <i>The Chairperson is not a DE appointee.</i>	Annual self-assessment completed (usually summer), accompanied by informal meeting with Deputy Secretary	Deputy Secretary for Investment, Infrastructure & Area Planning - DE Chair - CCMS
---	--	--

5. Chief Executive Recruitment & Performance review

ALBs should engage with the Department at an early stage in the event of the recruitment of a new Chief Executive. While recognising the role of the Board as employer, the Department will work closely with the ALB in the recruitment and selection process, remuneration etc., in line with extant guidance.

Activity	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
<u>Setting objectives for the Chief Executive</u> <i>CCMS Chairperson takes the lead in setting the Chief Executives' personal performance objectives and for assessing their performance.</i>	Apr/May - Director of CSEG writes to Chairperson to outline key Ministerial/Dept priorities which should be reflected in the CEO's personal objectives Chairperson agrees CEO objectives during Quarter 1	Director of Corporate Services & Education Governance - DE Chair and Chair's Committee (remuneration committee) – CCMS
<u>Chief Executive Performance appraisal</u>	Will be completed before end of May each year	Chair – CCMS

6. Assurances

Add details of the timetable for submission of key assurance sources and any other assurance related activity

Action	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
<u>Governance & Accountability Review (GAR) meetings</u> •	First GAR – usually June (for 26/27, will be September 2026) normally focus on draft Accounts, & Governance Second GAR – usually November (for 26/27, will be December 2026) normally focus on mid-year Gov Statements,	Director of CSEGD - DE (Second GAR to be chaired by Minister, with Permanent Secretary in attendance) CEO, Senior Leadership Team – CCMS (Chair or Vice Chair to attend any GAR chaired by the Minister)

	Business Plans and Budgets. Third GAR - March normally focus on business targets and budgets for the forthcoming year	
DE attendance at ARAC DE observer at each meeting; minutes of ARAC meetings and associated papers, as appropriate, circulated to DE observer	6 x per annum (usually September, November, January, March, April, and June)	Head of EGT – DE (observer capacity) ARAC Chair and secretariat - CCMS
Governance Statement (GS) (a) Mid-Year (b) End-Year	(a) Commission usually September Receipt of Draft Statement – mid Oct DE Feedback on Draft / Finalised – Oct/Nov (b) Commission usually mid-January Receipt of Draft GS – mid March DE Feedback on compliance – early April Final draft GS to EGT by end April.	Head of EGT – DE CEO, Chair and ARAC Chair – CCMS Signed & dated, with confirmation (Chairperson/Board/ARAC, as Applicable) that this has been cleared.
Annual Report and Accounts	Accounts Direction and Interim Timetable to CCMS – January/February Draft Accounts of CCMS submitted to DE in accordance with deadline specified in Interim Timetable (usually in and around the 17th working day of April). Liaise and organise laying or presenting Accounts in the Assembly – DoF advise of deadline (usually early July)	Head of FRT - DE CEO, CFO & Chair & ARAC Chair – CCMS

	Review of Financial Processes consolidation Pack usually submitted to DE – in line with draft accounts submission date.	
Report to those Charged with Governance DE ARAC NDPB AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE	Provided in conjunction with Annual Audit DE ARAC's normally takes place in September, December, March, May, and June.	Head of EGT – DE CEO /CFO– CCMS Chairpersons' Committee and ARAC Chair – CCMS Head of FRT – DE CEO / CFO – CCMS
Engagement on other planned NIAO reports	As required	Head of Internal Audit and EGT – DE DHRWG - CCMS
Head of Internal Audit Annual report/Opinion	Annually	Head of Internal Audit and EGT – DE DHRWG & CFO – CCMS
Internal Audit Strategy and Plans	Annually	Head of EGT – DE DHRWG & CFO – CCMS
Internal Audit External Quality Assessment	To be conducted at least once every five years	Head of Internal Audit and EGT – DE DHRWG & CEO - CCMS

7. Budget Management

Add details of the information and returns to be provided.

Item and Purpose	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
Engagement on budget requirements and Forecast Expenditure for the Financial Year	Autumn AME Exercise – late September Budget for next Financial Year:	Head of FMT – DE CEO & CFO– CCMS

	consultation with CCMS – TBC Final AME Exercise – usually early December	
Departmental approval of the annual budget	Annually usually in advance of the new financial year	Head of FMT – DE CEO, CFO, Chair of FPC – CCMS
Monthly Financial Management Returns	Monthly usually within 6 working days after month end subject to Departmental review	Head of FMT – DE CFO– CCMS
Annual/Monthly Cash Forecast	Annual Cash Forecast due at end of April/early May. Monthly Cash Forecast is due the first week of the month, i.e. July forecast will be due first week of June.	Head of FRT – DE CFO – CCMS
Monitoring Round Returns	June Monitoring – usually second week of May October Monitoring – usually final week August / first week of September January Monitoring – usually first week of November (subject to DoF confirmation each year)	Head of FMT – DE CFO and CEO – CCMS
Provisional Outturn	Obtained from CCMS – usually late April	Head of FMT – DE CFO – CCMS
Final Outturn	Obtained from CCMS – usually mid-July	Head of FMT – DE CFO – CCMS
Losses and Special Payments	Reported in line with delegated authority and in the CCMS Annual Report and Accounts. All losses and special payments outside the delegated authority of CCMS require Departmental approval.	Head of FRT – DE CFO– CCMS

External Consultancy (if required)	Annual Update of spend at 31 March of each year	Head of FRT – DE CFO-CCMS
---	---	------------------------------

8. Other		
Item and Purpose	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
Accounting Officer – Fitness to Act as Accounting Officer	To be requested as part of the annual Governance Statement	Head of EGT – DE CEO – CCMS
<u>Fraud Reporting</u> Theft, Fraud & Bribery a standing agenda item for GARs Annual fraud return commissioned by DoF on fraud and theft suffered by CCMS.	Immediate reporting of all frauds (proven or suspected including attempted fraud. [See section 6 GARs]	Department will report frauds immediately to DoF and C&AG. CFO and CEO and Chair of ARAC-CCMS Accountability and Financial Management Division - DoF CEO / CFO/ Chair of ARAC – CCMS
<u>Complaints Handling /Whistleblowing cases</u>	Standing item on GAR agendas - see section 6	Head of EGT / Internal Audit – DE DHRWG – CCMS
<u>Media management protocols</u> – independence of ALB to engage with media/announcements of corporate and policy communications significant to ALB - arrangements to share press releases where relevant – ensure no surprises.	As required	Press Office and Internal Communications Team (in liaison with EGT) – DE CEO and Info & Comms Officer – CCMS
<u>Preparation of business cases for expenditures above delegated limits</u> – departments and ALBs to consider working together to share expertise where appropriate.	As required	Deputy Director of Finance / Head of EAU – DE CFO– CCMS
<u>CCMS Corporate Risk Register</u> Alignment (with DE CRR) and quality assurance exercise	DE opening CRR for new financial year shared with CCMS in April/May Risk alignment exercise usually undertaken in Summer	Head of EGT - DE CEO and CFO- CCMS

9. Review of the Partnership Arrangement*Tailor as required to reflect the specific requirements*

Item and Purpose	Frequency/Timing	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
Light touch review of the Partnership Agreement (including update to Annual Engagement Plan)	Schedule as part of the annual Business Planning cycle	Heads of EGT and FRT – DE CEO & DHRWG– CCMS Directors of CSEGD and Finance / Deputy Director of Governance – DE
Formal review of the Partnership Agreement	To be conducted once every three years	Heads of EGT and FRT – DE (sign off by Permanent Secretary) CEO & Chair of FPC – CCMS

Annex 3 - Delegations

Delegated authorities

CCMS shall obtain the Department's prior written approval before:

- entering into any undertaking to incur any expenditure that falls outside the delegations or which is not provided for in the ALB's annual budget as approved by the Department;
- incurring expenditure for any purpose that is or might be considered novel or contentious, or which has or could have significant future cost implications;
- making any significant change in the scale of operation or funding of any initiative or particular scheme previously approved by the Department;
- making any change of policy or practice which has wider financial implications that might prove repercussive or which might significantly affect the future level of resources required; or
- carrying out policies that go against the principles, rules, guidance and advice in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.

CCMS's Specific Delegated Authorities

The delegated expenditure limits set out in the table overleaf have been agreed by DE and CCMS. In addition, DE's delegated authority (above which DoF approval is required) is set out in DAO (DoF) 05/25 Departmental Delegation/Requirements for DoF Approval⁴, with DE specific delegations set out in DE – Specific delegations (Sep 2025)⁵.

⁴ [DAO \(DoF\) 05/25 - Departmental Delegations/requirements for DoF Approval](#)

⁵ [DE - Specific delegations Sep 2025](#)

Delegated Authority (General)

	CCMS £000s	Department of Education £000s
Resource	250	>250
IT	100	>100
Capital	250	>250
External Consultancy	-	All
Campaign Advertising	10	>10

Losses and Special Payments Delegated Authority

The CCMS Chief Executive has delegated authority to write off losses and make special payments up to:

Type of loss/special payment	Maximum amount per case/incident £
Cash losses	1,000
Stores/Equipment losses	1,000
Constructive losses and fruitless payments	1,000
Claims abandoned or waived	1,000
Losses – foregoing recovery of the whole or any of the collective overpayment	No delegation
Compensation payments made under legal obligation, i.e. Court Order	Full delegation
Special Severance payments	No delegation
Compensation payments made from a Civil Bill or where a Writ has been issued	No delegation
Compensation payments following legal advice: Individual compensation claims settled out of court up to £10k where the legal advice is that CCMS will not win the case if contested in court. This total includes plaintiff legal costs.	Up to 10,000
Compensation payments without legal advice – individual compensation claims settled out of court. This includes plaintiff costs	No delegation
Extra-contractual payments	Up to 10,000
Ex-gratia Payments	Up to 1,000
Payments to contractors outside of a contract	Up to 1,000
Extra statutory and extra regulatory payments	Up to 10,000

Financial remedy payments over £500 (i.e. payments made to complainants through CCMS's internal complaints procedures / processes)	No delegation
Overpayments of pay pensions and allowances By miscalculation / misinterpretation / full facts unavailable)	No delegation

Gifts

The Chief Executive may authorise gifts up to the value of £100, or collective gifts up to the value of £1,000 – these gifts will not be used for the benefit of staff or members.

Records of gifts should be kept. If CCMS is in any doubt whether a particular expenditure counts as publicity or a gift, it should consult DE.

The prior approval of DE must be obtained for amounts above these values.

Commercial Insurance

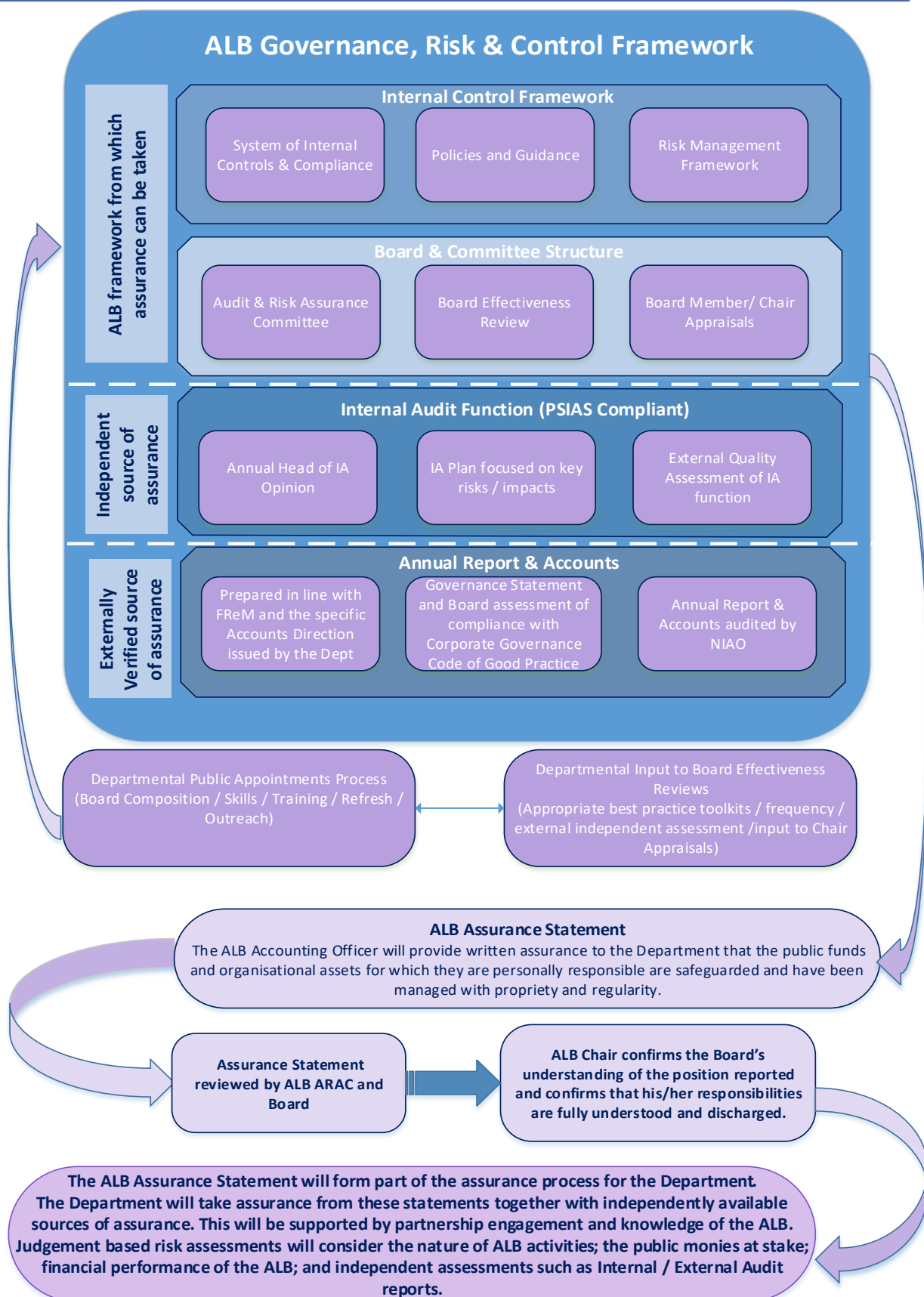
CCMS shall not take out any insurance without the prior approval of DE and DoF, other than third party insurance required by the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1981 (as amended) and any other insurance which is a statutory obligation or which is permitted under Annex 4.5 of MPMNI.

In the case of a major loss or third-party claim DE shall liaise with CCMS about the circumstances in which an appropriate addition to budget out of DE's funds and/or adjustment to CCMS targets might be considered. DE will liaise with DoF Supply where required in such cases.

A Certificate of Exemption for Employer's Liability Insurance has been issued to CCMS.

These delegations shall not be altered without the prior agreement of the department and, where applicable, DoF.

Annex 4 – Illustrative System of Assurance



Annex 5 – Concerns/Complaints in respect of Council members

In line with the NI Code of Good Practice and the arrangements in this Partnership Agreement the approach to concerns/complaints raised in respect of CCMS Council members should be transparent and collaborative. The principle of early and open engagement is important, with the Department made aware of any concerns/complaints as soon as practicable.

While Council Members are Public Appointees/office holders rather than CCMS employees a CCMS employee may utilise CCMS's grievance procedure/other HR procedure to raise a complaint against a Council member. The CCMS employee raising the grievance should expect this to be handled in line with CCMS's HR procedures.

Concerns/complaints from members of the public might also be raised through:

- CCMS [Complaints Handling procedures](#) including Whistleblowing arrangements,
- Directly with CCMS or
- under the Department of Education's [Raising Concerns at Work](#) (Public Interest Disclosure / Whistleblowing).

Arrangements for handling of a concern/complaint in respect of an individual Council Member are outlined in the CCMS Complaints Handling Procedures.

Where a concern/complaint relates to the CCMS Chair, CCMS should engage with the Department at the outset to determine the approach to handling the complaint/concern.

Differences of view in relation to matters which fall within the Council's responsibilities are a matter for the Council to resolve through consensus-based decision making in the best interests of the CCMS.

Exceptionally a concern/complaint may be raised by a Council Member about a fellow Council Member or a senior member of CCMS staff. The Chair of CCMS should

engage with the Department at the outset to ensure that arrangements for handling the concern/complaint are clear. The Department may determine that it should make arrangements to deal with the concern/complaint. This will be agreed at the outset.

Annex 6 - Applicable Guidance

The following guidance is applicable to CCMS:

Guidance issued by the Department of Finance

All Dear Accounting Officer (DAO) and Finance Director (FD) letters and associated guidance, including:

- [Managing Public Money NI \(MPMNI\)](#)
- [DoF Governance and Risk Guidance](#)
- [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook](#)
- [Public Sector Internal Audit Standards \(PSIAS\)](#)
- [Internal Audit Arrangements - Relationships between Departments and Arm's Length Bodies](#)
- [Internal Audit Reporting: NIAO Access](#)
- [Accounting officer appointments, roles and responsibilities](#)
- [Anti-Fraud Guidance and Managing the Risk of Fraud](#)
- [Better Business Cases \(NI\)](#)
- [Finance Director letters \(FDs\)](#)
- [Dear Accounting Officer letters \(DAOs\)](#)
- [Government Financial Reporting Manual \(FReM\)](#)
- [Requirement to complete a Governance Statement \(DAO \(DFP\) 10/12\)](#)
- [Guidance for preparation and publication of Annual Report and Accounts](#)
- [Procurement Guidance](#)
- [Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality \(DAO \(DFP\) 10/06\)](#)
- [Public Bodies – A Guide for NI Departments](#)
- [Corporate Governance in central government departments – code of good practice](#)
- [On Board: A Guide for Board Members of Public Bodies \(November 2010\)](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Board Members \(FD \(DFP\) 04/14 attachment\)](#)
- [Accounting Officer Handbook - HMT Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money](#)

Other Guidance and Best Practice

- Specific guidance issued by the DE
- Recommendations made by the NI Audit Office ([NIAO Recommendations](#))
- NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee ([PAC](#))
- [NIAO Good Practice Guides](#)
- NI Public Services Ombudsman ([NIPSO](#))
- [Equality Commission \(NI\)](#)
- [Information Commissioner's Office](#)
- [Commissioner for Public Appointments \(NI\)](#)

Annex 7 – Role of the Minister

Role of the Minister

The Chair of CCMS is responsible to the Minister. Communication between the Council and the Minister should normally be through the Chair.

The departmental Accounting Officer is responsible for advising the relevant Minister on a number of issues including the CCMS objectives and targets, budgets and performance.

In addition to being answerable to the Assembly as laid out in paragraph 2.4, the Minister is also responsible for:

- Setting the strategic direction and overall policies and priorities for the ALB as reflected in the PfG;
- Approving the ALB's Business and Corporate Plan;
- Setting the ALB's budget; and
- Appointment of non-executive Council members (as set out within Schedule 8 of the 1989 Order). The Minister may also be involved in considering the size and composition of the CCMS Council – see para 15.3.

Note: During a period of suspension information on [laying of papers](#) in the NI Assembly and other advice may be sought from assembly.section@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Annex 8 – Partnerships between Departments and Arm's Length Bodies: NI Code of Good Practice

NI Code of Good Practice



NI Code of Good
Practice v3 (30 03 23)