Partnership Agreement between the Department of Education (DE) and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

Version 4.1 – August 2026

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Introduction

1. The Partnership Agreement

1.1 This document sets out the partnership arrangements between the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department of Education (DE). In particular, it explains the overall governance framework within which CCEA 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
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.
PURPOSE
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.

ASSURANCE
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.
VALUE
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.
ENGAGEMENT
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.

A full copy of the Northern Ireland 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 Partnerships between departments and arm's length bodies: Code of Good Practice (finance-ni.gov.uk)). Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance to be established between CCEA and DE and this is reflected in this agreement.

1.4 DE and CCEA are committed to:

- working together within distinct roles and responsibilities;
- maintaining focus on successful delivery of Programme for Government outcomes and Ministerial/Departmental priorities);
- maintaining open and honest communication and dialogue;
- keeping each other informed of any issues and concerns, and of emerging areas of risk;

- supporting and challenging each other on DE policy development and CCEA delivery [when developing policy this may cut across more than one Department];
- seeking to resolve issues quickly and constructively;
- acting at all times in the public interest and in line with the values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality; and
- ensuring that policy advice is aligned to CCEA's legislative responsibilities.

1.5 The effectiveness of the partnership and the associated Engagement Plan will be reviewed each year by DE and CCEA, 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.

1.6 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 CCEA's size and overall responsibilities and will be published on DE and CCEA's website as soon as practicable following completion.

1.7 A copy of this agreement has been placed in the Northern Ireland Assembly Library and is available on the DE and CCEA websites.

CCEA Establishment and Purpose

2. Statutory Purpose and Strategic Objectives

2.1 CCEA is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB) established under The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and its constitution is set out in Schedule 3 of the 1998 Order. CCEA has both executive and advisory functions, but it does not carry these out on behalf of the Crown. CCEA receives its core funding through grant-in-aid from DE. Statutory authority for the payment of grant by DE to CCEA is contained in paragraph 12 of Schedule 3 to the 1998 Order.

2.2 Grant is paid to CCEA to enable it to carry out the functions and meet the objectives set out in Articles 74-79 of the Education (NI) Order 1998.

2.3 CCEA's statutory duties, functions and powers are as follows.

Duties

- Advise DE on all matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and examinations for children in nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools, those of school age in grant-aided schools and young people aged 16-19 in full-time education.
- Regulate the standard of general qualifications.
- Conduct pupil assessments at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and award a range of qualifications, such as GCSEs, GCE A and AS levels, Entry Level Qualifications, and Vocational Qualifications.
- Provide vocational qualifications advisory and support functions to the Department for the Economy (DfE) on matters specified by DfE (in line with provisions in the Education (NI) Order 1998).

Functions

2.4 CCEA's principal statutory functions in relation to DE are to:

- keep under review all aspects of the curriculum, examinations and assessment;
- advise DE on matters concerned with the curriculum, assessment, examinations and external qualifications;
- publish and distribute, or secure or assist the publication and distribution of, information relating to the curriculum;
- publish and disseminate, or assist in the publication and dissemination of, information relating to examinations and assessment;
- carry out statutory consultations required by the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 in relation to the curriculum;
- conduct, and award the appropriate certificates for, examinations and assessments;
- conduct the moderation of relevant examinations and assessments, ensuring that standards are recognised as equivalent to the standards of examinations and assessments conducted by other bodies or authorities exercising similar functions elsewhere in the United Kingdom;
- develop and publish criteria for the accreditation of relevant external examinations and accredit submitted qualifications that meet such criteria;
- produce, secure or assist the production of teaching materials in connection with the curriculum and assessment, to include multimedia resources and the development of educational technology; and
- carry out such other activities as DE may direct in connection with its other statutory functions.

2.5 Reports or returns submitted to DE in exercise of CCEA's Statutory functions should be in the requested format and within the requested timescale.

2.6 In relation to DfE, CCEA's principal function is to provide advice and support to DfE and other relevant organisations with any matters relating to the use of vocational qualifications by organisations funded by DfE. Such matters shall be specified in an annual letter of offer issued from DfE to CCEA before 1 April each year.

2.7 In performing these functions, CCEA:

- may commission research and development in relation to any of its functions;
- may arrange for relevant examinations to be conducted on its behalf by other examining bodies;
- may seek and obtain independent professional advice;
- may form bodies corporate;
- may charge fees in connection with the relevant examinations as may be approved by DE; and
- shall have regard to the requirements of those with special learning needs and industry, commerce and the professions regarding education.

CCEA is also required to make arrangements for the consideration of appeals against any of its decisions. Its activities are subject to review by the NI Commissioner for Complaints (the Northern Ireland Ombudsman). It is recognised that CCEA is also accountable in respect of its activities and decisions to a range of other oversight bodies.

Classification

2.8 For policy/administrative purposes, CCEA is classified as an executive non-departmental public body.

2.9 For national accounts purposes, CCEA is classified to the central government sector. References to CCEA include, (where they exist), all its subsidiaries and joint ventures that are classified to the public sector for national accounts purposes.

2.10 The Minister of Education is answerable to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the overall performance and delivery of both DE and CCEA. CCEA will therefore support the Minister, and by extension Department officials, in relation to delivering the Minister's priorities.

2.11 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.

2.12 To that end there is strategic alignment between the aims and objectives of DE and CCEA and expected outcomes for children and young people - aligned with Ministerial and DE's strategic priorities and the wider Executive Programme for Government. Annual engagement between DE and CCEA will take place as set out in the annual Engagement Plan (see Annex 2).

2.13 The strategic aims of CCEA are to:

- enable the full potential of all learners to be achieved and recognised;
- ensure that young people are equipped functionally and emotionally to be able to exploit the opportunities presented locally and globally and in a changing world;
- ensure education provision reflects the needs of individual learners, the community and the Northern Ireland economy;
- ensure that access to learning opportunities is available to all;
- ensure that all stakeholders (including schools, employers and higher education institutions) have confidence in the integrity of the qualifications system.

CCEA Governance Arrangements

3. Organisational Status

3.1 CCEA 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 CCEA has an established Corporate Governance Framework which reflects all relevant good practice guidance. The framework includes the governance structures established within CCEA 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 CCEA's Annual Governance Statement together with the CCEA 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 CCEA is required to follow the principles, rules, guidance and advice in *Managing Public Money Northern Ireland*. CCEA should at all times adhere to the *Public Procurement Policy Statement* and information should be handled in accordance with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office and in compliance with UK GDPR. A list of other applicable guidance and instructions which CCEA 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. CCEA Council and Committees

5.1 CCEA is led by a Board (hereafter referred to as the Council), appointed by the Minister of Education, in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Education (NI) Order 1998. The Council consists of a Chairperson (Chair) and not fewer than nine, or more than 17 other members. 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 four years (maximum of two terms) or such other term as may be specified by the Minister/DE.

5.2 The Minister may appoint two assessors to the Council, who shall be entitled to receive notice of, and to attend and speak at, meetings of the Council and of committees and sub-committees but shall not be entitled to vote. If a query arises in relation to the specifics of the assessors' remit the Minister or Department will seek and provide clarity if required.

5.3 As Public Appointees, Council members are office holders rather than employees and are not therefore subject to employee Terms and Conditions but are bound by the Terms & Conditions set by the Department upon their appointment. Council appraisal arrangements are set out in paras 15.1 and 15.2 and matters for consideration in dealing with concerns/complaints in respect of Council members are provided in Annex 5.

5.4 The purpose of the Council is to provide effective leadership and strategic direction to the organisation and to ensure that the policies and priorities set by the Minister of Education, and by extension the Department, are implemented. It is responsible for ensuring that the organisation has effective and proportionate governance arrangements in place and an internal control framework which allows 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.

5.5 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 however support the Chief Executive as appropriate in the exercise of their duties.

5.6 Council members act solely in the interests of CCEA 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)). CCEA has a Council Code of Conduct and there are mechanisms in place to deal with any Council disputes/conflicts to ensure they do not become wider issues that impact on its effectiveness. A Council Register of Interests is maintained, kept up to date and is publicly available to help provide transparency and promote public confidence in CCEA.

5.7 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.

5.8 It is for the Council to decide what information it needs and in what format, for its meetings and to ensure 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.

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

5.10 CCEA agreed arrangements in respect of Council meetings and committees which may include attendance by Departmental representatives (usually the

Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance or a deputising official) in an observer capacity.

6. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

6.1 A further important aspect of CCEA's governance is its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, established in line with the extant Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (Northern Ireland).

6.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's purpose/role is to support the Accounting Officer and 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 CCEA and DE have agreed arrangements in respect of Audit and Risk Assurance Committees which may include:

- attendance by Departmental representatives (usually the Head of Education Governance Team or a deputising official) in an observer capacity at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings;
- access to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee papers and minutes;
- any input required from the 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. CCEA Chair

7.1 The Chair, appointed by, and is responsible to, the Minister of Education, is responsible 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, he or she should ensure:

- CCEA'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 CCEA's affairs are conducted with regularity and probity and deliver value for money, as well as meeting the requirements of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland.
- there is an appropriate balance of skills appropriate to the Council's business;
- members are fully briefed on terms of appointment, duties, rights and responsibilities;
- members receive and maintain appropriate training;
- the Minister, and by extension the Department, is advised of the Council's skills and knowledge needs when vacancies arise;
- there is a Corporate Governance Framework in place setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Council in line with relevant guidance; and
- this includes a code of conduct for members, consistent with relevant guidance.

7.2 The role 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 and their appointment letters.

7.3 The role also requires a presence in the organisation and cultivating 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. CCEA Chief Executive

8.1 The role of the Chief Executive is to run CCEA's business. 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 the 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 Council as a whole, for CCEA's performance and delivery of outcomes and targets and is responsible for implementing the decisions of the Council and its Committees. Where the Chief Executive is not a member of the Council (see paragraph 8.2), 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 agenda items 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 and Council 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. He/she shall advise the Departmental Accounting Officer of any complaints about CCEA 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 the day-to-day management of staff including 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 create staff or create posts below Director level. At Director level and above Departmental approval is required to create or to grade posts. In creating and grading posts 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 the organisation. The Chief Executive is committed to fostering good employee and industrial relations as an important aid to the achievement of organisational objectives and will ensure effective communication and consultation with all staff and their recognised trade union.

Role of the Department of Education

9. Partnership Working with CCEA

9.1 DE and CCEA have distinct roles in the planning and delivery of education services while both working to achieve the strategic priorities of the Minister of Education. The partnership between DE and CCEA is open, honest, constructive and based on trust in line with *Public Bodies: A Guide for NI Departments*. There is mutual understanding of each other's objectives and clear expectations on the terms of engagement.

9.2 In exercising its functions CCEA has absolute clarity on how its purpose and objectives in implementing policy and delivering services align with those of DE which is responsible for developing and revising policy; as well as agreement on how best to build mutual understanding of its strategic priorities and how they support and deliver on the Minister's, and by extension the Department's, priorities. Clarity and agreement on the approval processes for staffing and expenditure is also key along with a focus on optimising reporting arrangements. 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 CCEA and where possible joint programme/project delivery boards/arrangements. CCEA may also be involved as a partner in policy/strategy development and provide 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 incurred, or commitments entered into. The Accounting Officer of DE has established an internal framework of delegated authority for the Department and its ALBs which apply to CCEA. This has been provided to CCEA and is available, with other specific approval requirements established in respect of CCEA, at Annex 3.

9.5 Once CCEA's budget has been approved by the Minister [and subject to any restrictions imposed by statute] CCEA shall have authority to incur expenditure approved in the budget to deliver effectively on its statutory duties 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 Northern Ireland and Better Business Cases Northern Ireland.

9.6 The Department shall also promote and advocate for CCEA's role in a cross - government context by connecting with other NICS departments and the wider Public Sector to identify synergies and opportunities for wider partnerships.

10. Lead Departmental Official

10.1 DE has appointed the Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance to manage the relationship with CCEA and ensure effective partnership working. Engagement between the Department and CCEA will be co-ordinated, collaborative and consistent. A clear sense of collaboration and partnership will be communicated to staff in both the Department and CCEA in order to promote mutual understanding and support.

10.2 The Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance is the lead co-ordinating official and oversees the Departmental CCEA Sponsorship Team (embedded within Education Governance Team, which also takes the lead on business planning and risk management issues). 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.

10.3 The relevant DE policy directors are the policy leads for any other specific policy and delivery issues relating to CCEA's business and will have a clear understanding of CCEA's responsibilities for policy implementation and operational delivery and the relevant audiences/stakeholders involved:

- The Director of Qualifications, 14-19 Strategy and Statistics and Research will take the lead on qualifications related issues;
- The Director of the Curriculum Taskforce will take the lead on curriculum related issues; and
- The Director of Teaching and Learning Excellence will take the lead on key stage assessment issues.

10.4 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 CCEA's business and challenges.

11. Annual Engagement Plan

11.1 DE and CCEA 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 CCEA and DE. The engagement plan will be specific to CCEA and should not normally stray into operational oversight.

11.2 Engagement between the Department's lead official and their teams and CCEA 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 guidance[1], CCEA 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 and Ministerial/Departmental priorities. There should be good high level strategic alignment between DE and CCEA corporate/business plans. Once approved it will be the CCEA Council that primarily holds the Chief Executive to account for delivery and performance, although DE also has a monitoring role and holds

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

CCEA (as a Corporate Body) accountable for its performance. The Department will engage with CCEA on areas of strategic interest, linking Departmental policy and CCEA delivery of policy intent.

11.4 In order to monitor progress against its business plan, CCEA 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 or data to reflect progression towards the achievement of expected outcomes and any other matters as directed by the Department.

11.5 Any work which CCEA undertakes for DfE will be subject to arrangements put in place and agreed between CCEA and DfE. Such work will not be included in the business plan prepared and submitted by CCEA to DE.

11.6 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.

11.7 The primary assurance mechanism for DE will be through the formal Governance and Accountability Review (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 CCEA’s systems of internal control. The GAR provides an opportunity to recognise achievements and progress and also seek assurance on corrective action where this is required.

12. Departmental Accounting Officer

12.1 The Departmental Accounting Officer is accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly for the issue of grant in aid to CCEA. He/she has designated the Chief Executive of CCEA as Accounting Officer and the respective responsibilities of the Departmental Accounting Officer and the CCEA Accounting Officer are set out in Chapter 3 of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland. The Departmental Accounting Officer may withdraw the CCEA Accounting Officer designation if he/she concludes that the CCEA Accounting Officer is no longer fit 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 CCEA Council will be given a full account of the reasons for withdrawal and a chance to make representations. Withdrawal of CCEA Accounting Officer status would bring into question the continued employment of that individual as Chief Executive and the Chair should engage with the Department should such circumstances arise.

12.2 As outlined in section 8, the Chief Executive is accountable to the Council for their stewardship of the organisation. 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 Chair, to the Departmental Accounting Officer at Governance and Accountability and other meetings as required by DE.

12.3 The Departmental Accounting Officer must be informed in the event that the judgement of the CCEA Accounting Officer (on matters for which they are responsible) is over-ridden by the Council. The CCEA Accounting Officer must also take action if the Council is contemplating a course of action 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 CCEA or its Chief Executive.

12.4 In line with DoF requirements, the 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 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 Comptroller & Auditor General's (C&AG) 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 CCEA. 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 CCEA;
- 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 Accounting Officer’s advice on transactions in relation to regularity, propriety or value for money is overruled by the Council or its Chair.

Assurance Framework

14. Autonomy and Proportionality

14.1 DE will ensure that CCEA has the proportionate autonomy to deliver effectively, recognising its status as a separate legal entity which has its own Board and governance arrangements. Guidance on proportionate autonomy has been considered in determining the extent of engagement and assurance established between CCEA and DE and is reflected in this agreement.

14.2 A proportionate approach to assurance will be taken based on CCEA's overall purpose, business and budget and a mutual understanding of risk. The approach will include an agreed process through which the CCEA 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 CCEA Accounting Officer will arrange for their written assurance statements (Mid-year and Annual Governance Statements) to be discussed at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and presented to the Council prior to submission to the Department where possible. If not possible, or practicable, the Chair of the Council should have sight of the assurance statement, prior to being submitted to the Department.

14.4 For the Annual Governance Statement the Chair will provide written confirmation that the CCEA Accounting Officer's formal assurance has been considered by the Council and is reflective of CCEA's current position.

14.5 In addition to the CCEA Accounting Officer's written assurance, the Department will take assurance from the following key aspects of CCEA's own governance framework:

- Annual Review of Board effectiveness.
- Completion of Council Member Appraisals by DE Education Governance Team 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 CCEA Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

15. Board Effectiveness

15.1 The Chair will ensure that the Council undertakes an annual review of Board Effectiveness[2] 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, proportionate to the size and complexity of the organisation and keep this under review.

15.4 In addition to the annual review of Board Effectiveness CCEA 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 identify 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.

2 NIAO Board Effectiveness - A Good Practice Guide

16. Council Member Appraisals

16.1 The Chair will conduct an annual appraisal in respect of each Council member which will also inform the annual programme of Council 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. The individual Council member appraisals should be shared with the Department (Education Governance Team).

16.2 The Chair's annual appraisal will be undertaken by a senior official of the Department (usually the Deputy Secretary for Services and Sustainability). The appraisal will take account of the key characteristics of a good Chair set in the NIAO Good Practice Guide on Board Effectiveness available on the NIAO website. There will be close engagement between the Chair and the lead DE official on improvements identified through the appraisal process.

17. Internal Audit Assurance

17.1 CCEA 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, in accordance with PSIAS.

17.2 In the event that the internal audit function is contracted out CCEA shall ensure the DE is satisfied that the contract specification for the internal audit service meets the requirements of GIAS.

17.3 CCEA 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. CCEA will ensure 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 CCEA will ensure regular, periodic self-assessments of the internal audit function in line with PSIAS and will share these with the Department. CCEA will also liaise with DE 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. The Director of Corporate Services and Education Governance in DE, should be consulted in relation to the Terms of Reference for the EQA, and a copy of the report provided to them when complete.

17.5 CCEA will alert the Department to any less than satisfactory audit reports at the earliest opportunity on an ongoing basis. CCEA will also alert the Department to a less than satisfactory annual opinion from the Head of Internal Audit at the earliest opportunity. CCEA and DE will then engage closely on actions required to address the less than satisfactory opinion in order to move CCEA to a satisfactory position as soon as possible.

17.6 The Department will take assurance from the fact that CCEA 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 CCEA, at the Department's request.

17.7 The CCEA Accounting Officer has a responsibility to bring to the immediate attention of the Department's Principal Accounting Officer any significant issue including those relating to serious financial concerns, systems weaknesses or regularity and propriety.

17.8 CCEA 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 CCEA is required to prepare an Annual Report and Accounts in line with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by the Department of

Finance (DoF) and the specific Accounts Direction issued by DE, and in accordance with the deadlines specified.

18.2 The C&AG will arrange to audit CCEA's annual accounts and will issue an independent opinion on the accounts. The C&AG will liaise with CCEA 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 CCEA'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. CCEA 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 CCEA which will be shared with DE.

18.5 CCEA 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, DE will engage with CCEA 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 CCEA has used its resources in discharging its functions. The C&AG may also carry out thematic examinations that encompass the functions of CCEA.

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, CCEA 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 the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and 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.

Deborah O'Hare

Signed (CCEA Chair)
Date: 17 August 2026

Signed (CCEA Chief Executive)
Date: 17 August 2026

Sharon Smyth

Signed (Department – DE Deputy Secretary)
Date: 1 September 2026

Annex 1 - Applicable Legislation

Founding legislation and other key statutes which provide CCEA with its statutory functions, duties and powers.

Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993

CCEA was established on 1 April 1994 under the Educational and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. It replaced the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council (NICC) and the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (NISEAC).

Education (NI) Order 1998

The functions of the Council are set out in Part VIII of the Education (NI) Order 1998. CCEA's principal functions in relation to DE are:

- to keep under review all aspects of the curriculum, examinations and assessment;
- to advise DE on matters concerned with the curriculum, assessment, examinations and external qualifications;
- to publish and distribute, or secure or assist the publication and distribution of, information relating to the curriculum;
- to publish and disseminate, or assist in the publication and dissemination of, information relating to examinations and assessment;
- to carry out statutory consultations required by the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 in relation to the curriculum;
- to conduct, and award the appropriate certificates for, examinations and assessments;
- to conduct the moderation of relevant examinations and assessments, ensuring that standards are recognised as equivalent to the standards of examinations and assessments conducted by other bodies or authorities exercising similar functions elsewhere in the United Kingdom;

- with DE’s approval, develop and publish criteria for the accreditation of relevant external examinations and accredit submitted qualifications that meet such criteria;
- to produce, or secure or assist the production of, teaching materials in connection with the curriculum and assessment, to include multimedia resources and the development of educational technology;
- to make reports and returns and give information to DE; and
- to carry out such other activities as DE may direct in connection with its other statutory functions.

In relation to the Department for the Economy (DfE), CCEA’s principal function is:

- to provide advice and support to DfE and other relevant organisations with any matters relating to the use of vocational qualifications by organisations funded by DfE. Such matters shall be specified in an annual letter of offer issued from DfE to CCEA before 1 April each year.

The CCEA constitution, status and procedures are set out in Schedule 3 of the Education (NI) Order 1998.

Other relevant legislation

The Education (NI) Order 2006 - content of curriculum
Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

Annex 2 – Illustrative Annual Engagement Plan

Good engagement is one of the key principles in the Partnership Code, underpinning the other principles of: Leadership; Purpose; Assurance; and Value.

As laid out in the Code, partnerships work well when relationships between departments and ALBs are open, transparent, honest, constructive and based on trust hand when there is mutual understanding of each other's objectives and clear expectations about the terms of engagement.

The template provided outlines the key areas of engagement between Departments and ALBs. The template is not intended to be prescriptive and should be completed collaboratively and agreed between the Department and the ALB.

CCEA Glossary of Acronyms

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee	ARAC
Arms-Length Body	ALB
Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Communications, Engagement and Multimedia	CMM
Curriculum and Assessment	CA
Finance, HR and Business Assurance	FHRBA

DE Glossary of Acronyms

Corporate Services and Education Governance Directorate	CSEGD
Curriculum Reform Programme	CRP
Curriculum Team and TransformED Implementation	CTTI
Economic Advisory Unit	EAU
Educational Governance Team	EGT
Education Technology and Procurement Team	ETPT
Education Workforce Directorate	EWD
Financial Monitoring Team	FMT
Financial Reporting Team	FRT

Irish Medium Team	IMEd
Key Stage Assessment and Exceptional Circumstances	KSAEC
Non-Teaching Workforce Team	NTWT
Press Office and Communications Team	POCT
Qualifications, 14-19 Strategy and Statistics & Research Directorate	QSSRD
Services and Sustainability Group	SSG

Engagement Plan 2026/27		
Policy Development and Delivery *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.*		
Policy Area	**Frequency/Timing**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Officials**
Curriculum		
Curriculum Continuous Improvement	As required	DE – Head of CTTI CCEA – CA Programme Manager
Curriculum Reform	As required	DE – Head of CRP CCEA – Director of CA
Qualifications		
Examinations and Delivery	Monthly from September to April then weekly from May to August	DE – Director of QSSRD CCEA – Director of Qualifications
Ad Hoc Meetings (in year requirements)	As required	DE – Director of QSSRD CCEA – Director of Qualifications
Assessment		
DE/CCEA Assessment Oversight Group	Weekly	DE – Head of KSAEC

		CCEA – Director of CA/Business Manager Qualifications
Regulation		
Revisions Specification Delivery Meeting	Monthly (2 weeks after the Examinations and Delivery Meeting)	DE – Director of QSSRD CCEA – Director of Qualifications
Other		
Strategic Strands of Special Educational Needs (SEN)	As required (SEN is integrated into all aspects of Transform ED but there are also separate streams)	DE – Head of CTTI CCEA – Director of CA
IME Strategy Working Group	Monthly	DE – Head of IMEd CCEA – relevant business / delivery areas (as required)
Strategic Planning		
Activity	**Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
CCEA Corporate Plan	As and when required	DE – Deputy Director of Governance & Head of EGT CCEA – CEO
CCEA Business Plan (BP)		
(a) Commissioning and development of BP for forthcoming financial year	Commissioning of 2027/28 BP – December 2026 First Draft received – January 2027	DE – CSEGD (Commissioning and Approval), EGT (Co-ordination) CCEA – Chief Executive's Office
(b) Approval of the BP	2027/28 final draft ready for approval – end March 2027	
(c) Monitoring of the BP	End Year (25/26) – April 2026	

	Quarter 2 (26/27) – October 2026 Quarter 3 (light touch) – January 2027 End Year – April 2027	
Joint Working *Add details of any interchange opportunities, and/or joint programme/project delivery boards*		
Activity	**Frequency/Timing**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
DE ICT Forum	Four times per year (February/May/September/ November)	DE – Finance Director (Chair) Head of ETPT (Deputy Chair) CCEA – Business Manager ICT
Emergency Management Steering Group	As and when required	DE – CSEGD (Chair) CCEA – Business Manager FHRBA
Board Appointments *Add details of any engagement related to Public Appointment exercises*		
Activity	**Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
Composite Public Appointments competition to fill two vacancies on CCEA Board	Competition launching September 2026. Appointments expected to be made December 2026/January 2027	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – Chairperson, CEO
Chief Executive Recruitment & Performance Review *Add details of any engagement related to the recruitment of a new Chief Executive (if anticipated during the year ahead). 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 in line with extant guidance.*		

Activity	Date	Lead Departmental/ALB Official
****Recruitment – Not applicable for 2026/27****		
Setting objectives for the CEO – CCEA Chairperson takes the lead in setting the CEO's personal performance objectives and for assessing their performance	April/May – EGT write to outline DE requirements for (i) Group A objectives – mandatory/core; (ii) Group B: objectives that reflect the CEO's role in delivery against DE priorities (PfG, Corporate & Business Plan etc); and (iii) Group C: internal management and efficiency etc.	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – Chairperson
Assurances *Add details of the timetable for submission of key assurance sources and any other assurance related activity*		
Action	**Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
Governance & Accountability Review (GAR) meetings	3 x per annum (usually June, December and March)	Chaired by – Director of CSEGD (twice), Education Minister (once) DE – EGT (co-ordinator); Directors of Finance, and relevant policy areas (as required) CCEA – CEO (CEO report); Senior Leadership Team & Chairperson (in attendance, as necessary)
DE/CCEA Business Oversight Meeting	3 times a year (one month before each GAR)	Chaired by – Director of CSEGD DE – EGT (co-ordinator); relevant policy areas (Assessment,

		Curriculum, Qualifications and Regulation) as required CCEA – relevant business / delivery areas (as required)
Outcome of the Review of Board Effectiveness and Annual Skills Audit (including checklist)	Annual review (usually summer) with an externally facilitated review at least once every three years	DE – EGT CCEA – Chairperson
Planning for the externally facilitated review of Board Effectiveness	Due 2026/27 (timing TBC)	DE – EGT CCEA - Chairperson
Board Assessments and planned training / development for Board members	Commissioned April (annually) with returns due June 2026	DE – EGT CCEA - Chairperson
Chairperson's Assessment	Self-assessment commissioned April (annually) with return due June 2026 Assessment meeting – usually late summer	DE – Deputy Secretary, SSG (EGT admin support) CCEA – Chairperson
Departmental Attendance at ARAC	Attendance as observer (four times per annum)	DE – EGT (observer capacity) CCEA – ARAC Secretariat
Mid-Year Governance Statement	Commissioned – September 2026 Receipt of draft – Mid October 2026 DE Feedback / Finalised – November 2026	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – CEO, Chairperson and ARAC Chair (signed and dated, with confirmation that this has been cleared by CEO and Chairperson)
End-Year Governance Statement	Commissioned – January 2027	

	Receipt of draft – Mid March 2027 DE Feedback – early April 2027 Final Draft to DE – end April 2027	
Annual Report and Accounts	Accounts Direction to CCEA – February Draft Accounts of CCEA submitted to DE as per deadline specified in Accounts Direction (usually circa fourth week of April). Liaise and organise laying or presenting Accounts in the Assembly – DoF advise of deadline (usually first week of July) Review of Financial Processes consolidation Pack usually submitted to DE – in line with draft accounts submission date.	DE – Head of FRT CCEA – CEO, Director of Finance, Chairperson and ARAC Chairperson
Report to those Charged with Governance	Provided in conjunction with Annual Audit	DE – EGT (via attendance at CCEA ARAC) CCEA – Director of Finance
DE ARAC NDBP Audit Recommendations Update.	DE FRT provides an update at ARAC on progress re addressing outstanding NDPB audit recommendations and will go out to NDPBs in advance of each ARAC requesting a progress update.	DE – FRT
Engagement on other planned NIAO reports	As required	DE – EGT (and relevant policy areas where required)

		CCEA – Director of Finance
Head of Internal Audit Annual report/Opinion	Annually	DE – EGT (via attendance at CCEA ARAC) CCEA – Director of Finance
Internal Audit Strategy and Plans	Annually	DE – EGT (via attendance at CCEA ARAC) CCEA – Director of Finance
Internal Audit External Quality Assessment	To be conducted at least once every five years	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – Director of Finance
Risk Alignment and Quality Assurance Exercise	Annually (usually summer)	DE – EGT CCEA – CEO
Budget Management *Add details of the information and returns to be provided.*		
Item and Purpose	**Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
Engagement on budget requirements and Forecast Expenditure for the Financial Year. Budget information gathering exercises.	Dates vary but typically are end of June (initial consideration) and early January (to inform Budget Strategy)	Head / Deputy Head of FMT
Monthly Financial Management Returns	7 working days after month end	Deputy Head of FMT
Monthly Cash Forecast	Typically, one month in advance	Head / Deputy Head of FRT
Annual Cash Forecast	April & November	Head / Deputy Head of FRT
Monitoring Round Returns	If 3 Monitoring Rounds (i.e. June, October & January), returns are due back April, August & December	Head / Deputy Head of FMT

Provisional Outturn	April	Head / Deputy Head of FMT
Final Outturn	July	Head / Deputy Head of FMT
Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) – Spring Budget (future years return)	December	Head / Deputy Head of FMT
AME – Autumn Budget (in-year position)	October	Head / Deputy Head of FMT
Engagement on Capital Requirements	Dependent on monitoring rounds and budget exercises commissioned by DoF	DE – Head of EGT CCEA - Business Manager FHRBA
Other *Tailor as required to reflect the specific requirements*		
Item and Purpose	**Submission Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
Accounting Officer - Fitness to Act as Accounting Officer	Submitted as part of the annual Governance Statement	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – CEO
Fraud Reporting	Immediate reporting of all frauds (proven or suspected including attempted fraud) Department will report frauds immediately to DoF and C&AG.	DE – Director of Finance CCEA – CEO
	Annual fraud return commissioned by DoF on fraud and theft suffered by CCEA	DE – EGT CCEA – Head of Internal Audit
Media management protocols – independence of ALB to engage with media/announcements of corporate and policy communications significant to ALB - arrangements to share press releases where	As required (may become a monthly communications meeting once resourcing within DE Press Office allows)	DE- Head of POCT CCEA – Business Manager CEM and relevant SMT Members

relevant – ensure no surprises		
Preparation of business cases – departments and ALBs to consider working together to share expertise where appropriate	As required	DE – EGT (receive, or copied into all CCEA Business Cases submitted to the Department), plus relevant Policy Area(s) and Head of EAU (as appropriate) CCEA – BM; FHRBA
Pay Remit returns in respect of CCEA staff	Submitted annually – The timing of the submission of pay remits is determined by the date of agreement for the relevant pay award	DE – Head of NTWT CCEA – BM; FHRBA
Whistleblowing cases/ Speaking Up/Raising Concerns	As required	DE –Director of CSEGD as Designated Officer. The Permanent Secretary will consider if an investigation is required and refer to IAS. CCEA – a member of CCEA Council.
Review of the Partnership Arrangement *Tailor as required to reflect the specific requirements*		
Item and Purpose	**Date**	**Lead Departmental/ALB Official**
Light touch review of the Partnership Agreement	Schedule following the end of the Business Year	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – Director of Finance / BM; FHRBA

Formal review of the Partnership Agreement	To be conducted once every three years	DE – Head of EGT CCEA – Director of Finance / BM; FHRBA

Annex 3 - Delegations

Delegated authorities

CCEA 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 its 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.

CCEA's Specific Delegated Authorities

The delegated expenditure limits set out in the table overleaf have been agreed by DE and CCEA. 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 Approval[3], with DE specific delegations set out in DE – Specific delegations (Sep 2025)[4].

[3] DAO (DoF) 05/25 - Departmental Delegations/requirements for DoF Approval
[4] DE - Specific delegations Sep 2025

Delegated Authority (General)

	CCEA £000s	Department of Education £000s
Resource	300	>300
IT	100	>100
Capital	300	>300
External Consultancy	-	All
Campaign Advertising	10	>10
PPP	-	All

Losses and Special Payments Delegated Authority

The CCEA 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 waivered	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 CCEA 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 CCEA'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 individual 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 CCEA 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

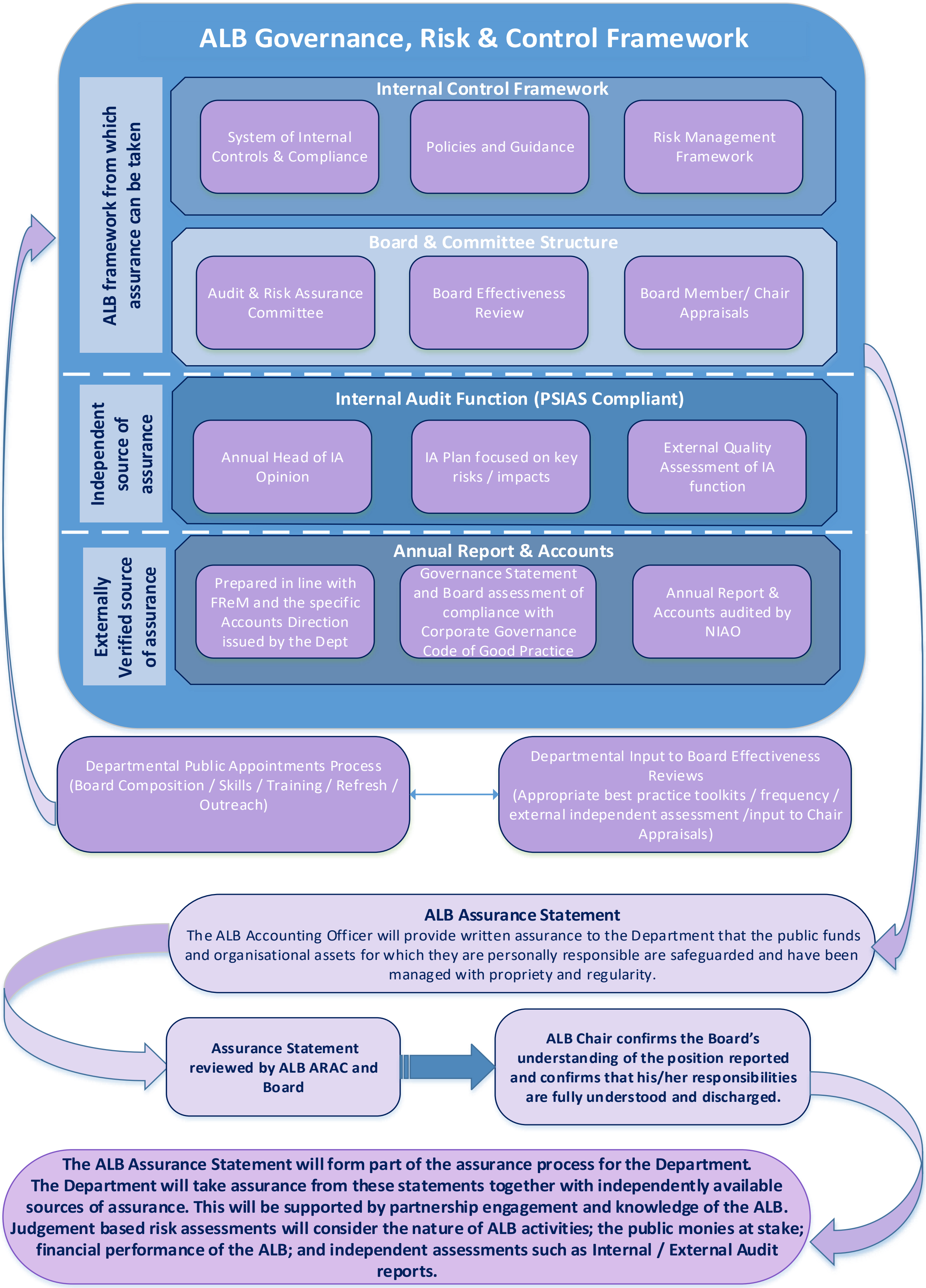
CCEA shall not take out any insurance without the prior approval of DE and DoF, other than third party insurance required by the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1981 (as amended) and any other insurance which is a statutory obligation or which is permitted under Annex 4.5 of MPMNI.

In the case of a major loss or third-party claim DE shall liaise with CCEA about the circumstances in which an appropriate addition to budget out of DE's funds and/or adjustment to CCEA 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 CCEA.

These delegations will be kept under review but 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 Board 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 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 CCEA employees an employee may utilise the grievance procedure/other HR procedure to raise a complaint against a Council member. The employee raising the grievance should expect this to be handled in line with the organisation's HR procedures.

Concerns/complaints might also be raised through:

- Raising Concerns/Whistleblowing arrangements;
- Complaints processes;
- Directly with CCEA; or
- DE's Raising Concerns at Work (Public Interest Disclosure / Whistleblowing).

Where a concern/complaint is received within CCEA in respect of an individual Board Member this should be provided to the Chair who should notify the Department at the outset in order that lead responsibility for handling the complaint/concern is clear in advance.

Where a concern/complaint relates to the Chair, CCEA should notify the Department at the outset for the Department to determine the approach to handling the complaint/concern.

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

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

Arrangements for concerns/complaints in respect of Council members should be reflected in all relevant procedures, including Standing Orders and Council Operating Frameworks.

Annex 6 - Applicable Guidance

The following guidance is applicable to CCEA:

Guidance issued by the Department of Finance

- Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI)
- HMT Orange Book - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- DoF Risk Management Framework
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook
- Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (GIAS)
- 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)
- Dear Consolidation Officer and Dear Consolidation Manager Letters incl. Letter of Appointment
- 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 Policy and 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 Department
- EU Delegations
- Recommendations made by the NI Audit Office/NI Assembly Public Accounts Committee
- NIAO Good Practice Guides
- Assist Management Strategy – Strategic Investment Board (SIB) guidance
- NI Public Services Ombudsman guidance (NIPSO)
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI)
- Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)
- Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI)

Annex 7 – Role of the Minister

Role of the Minister

The Chair of CCEA 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 organisation's objectives and targets, budgets and performance.

In addition to being answerable to the Northern Ireland Assembly as laid out in paragraph 2.10, the Minister is also responsible for:

- Setting the strategic direction and overall policies and priorities for CCEA as reflected in the PfG;
- Setting CCEA's budget; and
- Appointment of non-executive Council members The Minister may also be involved in considering the size and composition of the CCEA 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: Northern Ireland Code of Good Practice

Northern Ireland Code of Good Practice (version 2)

Code of Good
Practice update - 202