

TIMSS Grade 8 National Advisory Committee (NAC) for Ireland – Terms of Reference, August 2022

Introduction

TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) is a study of the IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) that measures the mathematics and science achievement of students in grade 4 (Fourth Class in Ireland) and grade 8 (Second Year). TIMSS began in 1995 and takes place every four years. To date, Ireland has taken part in four cycles of TIMSS: at both primary and post-primary level in 1995, 2015 and 2019; and at primary level only in 2011.

In Ireland, TIMSS is jointly administered by the Department of Education and the Educational Research Centre (ERC). The Department of Education appoints a National Advisory Committee for each grade level (i.e., a separate committee for TIMSS grade 4 and TIMSS grade 8) to assist with planning for the assessment, and the interpretation of survey outcomes.

Remit and function

The remit of the NAC will be to:

- Advise and provide observations to the Department of Education and the ERC on general issues concerning the national administration of TIMSS.
- Provide observations on the future directions of the study, including providing comments on drafts of framework documents.
- Comment on drafts of test items and how they relate to national curricula.
- Comment on draft national and international questionnaires that may be administered to teachers, principals, parents and students.
- Review the outcomes of the study, comment on draft national reports of the assessment and advise on recommendations. In particular, provide advice on policy implications of the outcomes of the assessment and how those outcomes could be effectively communicated to schools, teachers, parents, students and the education system generally.

Composition

The committee will comprise a mix of permanent and non-permanent representation. Permanent representation will be provided by the following:

- The Department of Education Inspectorate
- Department of Education Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit (CAP)
- Educational Research Centre (ERC)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- State Examinations Commission (SEC)

Non-permanent/expert representation will be provided by college lecturers, academics, researchers or practising teachers with expertise in the teaching of mathematics or science at Junior Cycle level.

The NAC will be chaired by a representative from the Inspectorate as nominated by the Department of Education. The Department will also identify a Deputy Chair who will serve as Chair in the event that the Chair is unavailable.

The NAC will comprise a maximum of 15 representatives. Other members may be co-opted from time to time as the need arises. Invitations to participate will be cleared through the Chairperson and publicised by the ERC.

Meeting Frequency

It is anticipated that the Committee will meet a minimum of twice a year. Meetings will be held in the ERC unless specified otherwise. It is recognised that face-to-face meetings are preferred, but may need to be replaced with online/remote meetings as needed.

Length of Term

The role, function and membership of the Committee can be reviewed and revised as appropriate during the lifecycle of the project to ensure continued relevance.

Membership of the committee will be reviewed at the beginning of each new TIMSS cycle (i.e. every four years, 12 months prior to the field trial). Generally, committee members will not serve for more than two successive TIMSS cycles. On resigning or leaving the NAC, individual members will be asked by the ERC to complete a form confirming that all confidential documentation and materials have been deleted or securely destroyed.

Conduct of meetings

Technical Support: The ERC will convene the meetings in consultation with the chairperson. It will organise and keep a record of the membership and the minutes of meetings. Minutes for the previous meeting are reviewed and agreed at the following meeting.

Confidentiality: As the NAC may be asked to review materials of a secure and confidential nature from time to time, individuals will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to receiving any NAC materials. Confidentiality agreements and processes are managed by the ERC. NAC members may also be asked to sign confidentiality agreements provided by other organisations, such as the IEA, to access embargoed material.

Document management and security: The ERC endeavours to issue meeting documentation in an accessible electronic format at least one week prior to the meeting. Where appropriate and necessary, the ERC will apply such security controls to these materials (e.g. encryption) as required.

Expenses

Committee membership is on a voluntary (unpaid) basis. However, in line with civil and public service policies and procedures, all reasonable and vouched costs incurred by NAC members for travel and subsistence to and from meetings will be reimbursed by the ERC on completion of an expense claim.