



# Educational Research Centre

*Annual Report 2019*

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## Chairperson's Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the annual report of the Educational Research Centre for 2019. In existence since the 1960s and established as a Statutory Body in September 2015, the Centre has a dual mission: to provide an assessment support service to schools and centres of education (including the development and provision of standardised tests and other assessment instruments); and to conduct independent research on all aspects of education including research that will inform policy making and the improvement of educational standards (Establishment Order SI No 392 of 2015).

The publication of the [ERC's first Strategic Plan](#) in spring 2019, covering 2019-2021, is an important milestone. The Plan has three phases, each roughly corresponding to a calendar year: transition, consolidation and development. The plan articulates how the statutory functions of the ERC translate into its work programme, and identifies three high-level objectives. The achievement of these strategic objectives is underpinned by six core values and five guiding principles.

The high-level strategic objectives (to stabilise and enhance the ERC's staffing base and physical environment; achieve a sustainable and strategic approach to test development/analysis and both commissioned and independently- (ERC-) initiated research; and to continue to build and enhance strong, transparent governance structures) are reflected in 10 goals and outcomes for 2019-2021. This annual report includes a consideration of progress on actions to date.

Following on from 2018, 2019 was characterised by transition and change while at the same time witnessing considerable progress in various research, test and corporate work strands.

Research highlights include

- the implementation of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) study in primary and post-primary schools
- in collaboration with the Educational Testing Service (USA), hosting of a [conference on the use of log-file and process data in international large-scale assessments](#)
- completion of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 autumn study, which is designed to provide evidence for the feasibility of administering PISA in Ireland in the autumn rather than in the spring
- successful implementation of the National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) field trial in primary schools
- establishment of a programme of work for DEIS and educational disadvantage more generally
- commencement of the first phase (multi-strand literature review) of the three-phase Teacher Professional Development (TPL) framework study
- commencement of the first (baseline) phase of the Digital Learning Framework evaluation study and publication of the baseline report
- establishment of the terms and design of the Gaeltacht Recognition Scheme (GRS) evaluation study, with collection and analysis of baseline and case study data
- working in collaboration with NEPS, the standardisation of a new diagnostic test of reading literacy with first years in some 80 schools
- initiation of the field trial preparations for PISA 2021 and PIRLS 2021
- publication of the PISA 2018 national report for Ireland.

The year 2019 was also busy and productive for the ERC's test department and standardised testing research teams, where newly-developed reading and mathematics standardised tests for primary schools were finalised for both paper and online administration; and an online assessment of spatial reasoning, and online versions of reading and mathematics for second years in Irish were finalised. Considerable effort has gone into the preparations to ensure that the new tests are available to schools, while at the same time maintaining availability of the previous versions of the tests. The ERC also worked to enhance its supports for schools for their use of these tests.

The ERC continues to provide both occasional and ongoing data analysis services, for example in its work on the Department of Education and Skills' Special Education Teacher allocation model, and annual attendance report for Tusla. Three ERC staff members continued to engage in their PhD research and studies.

ERC management has continued to work with the Department's Central Policy Unit to establish a structured and strategic approach to staffing and budgeting. The ERC submitted an independent review by the IPA of its organisational structures and staffing to the Department this year, and it is envisaged that this review will enable further improvements to the staffing and organisation of the ERC that are recommended in this report into 2020.

Several policies and procedures were developed and approved. These covered accounting, procurement, internal audit, HR, data privacy and security, and risk register. Furthermore, available pensions data were compiled and an external supplier provided pension statements for ERC staff on the Single Scheme, and a longer-term solution for payroll processing was identified. The ERC's Senior Management Team was formalised, and issues relating to temporary posts were addressed.

In 2019, we welcomed new staff and also said goodbye to others. Research Fellow Dr Susan Weir and Research Associate Dr Seán Close retired, and Executive Officer Paula Chute finished work in the Centre. In 2019, three research staff (Eemer Eivers, Lauren Kavanagh and David Millar) were on career breaks. We welcomed new Executive Officer Lynn Jackson to the Centre along with researchers Emmet Feerick, Caitríona Fitzgerald, Anastasios Karakolidis, Caitlin Myron, Sharon Nelis, Conall Ó Duibhir, Caroline Rawdon, and Kara Sampson.

Of course, much remains to be done. In particular, the ERC still needs to achieve a longer-term service level agreement with DCU. Regarding IT infrastructural issues and oversight, while improving, these will require continued attention in 2020. It is also hoped that a vacancy which arose on the Board in September 2018 will be filled shortly.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their contribution to the work of the Centre during the year. In particular, I want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of the CEO, Dr Jude Cosgrove. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms Anne Comey, Secretary to the Board; and to all the research and administrative staff of the ERC for their unstinting work and commitment. Finally, I wish to acknowledge our colleagues in various sections of the Department (Central Policy Unit, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Unit, Inspectorate, Social Inclusion, NEPS, Teacher Education, and Gaeltacht Education Units) for their ongoing support and collaboration.

*Pauric Travers*

Pauric Travers

Chairperson, ERC Governing Board

# Chapter 1: About the Educational Research Centre

## Introduction

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) was founded in 1966 and became an independent statutory agency of the Department of Education and Skills in September, 2015. As such, the ERC has to comply with a range of requirements, including the development of a strategic plan. A Governing Board for the ERC was established 12 months after it became a statutory body. This coincided with the establishment of the Institute of Education (IoE) in Dublin City University (DCU) which incorporated St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Church of Ireland College of Education and the DCU School of Education Studies<sup>1</sup>.

The work of the ERC is guided by the mission and functions set out in its Statutory Instrument<sup>2</sup>. The Establishment Order (SI 392 of 2015) draws a distinction between two statutory 'objects' (purposes) of the Centre:

- Providing an assessment support service to schools and centres for education
- Conducting independent (self-initiated) research, both commissioned and initiated by the Centre itself, on all aspects of education and at all levels of the education system.

The Establishment Order (Articles 8 and 9) specifies a non-exhaustive list of activities consistent with the furtherance of the objects of the function of the ERC (Appendix 1). The breadth of the list is indicative of multiple strands of work and collaboration that need to exist between ERC and various layers of the education system. It includes enabling schools to assess attainment levels and academic standards of students and to report systematically on these; assisting schools to identify individual student's special educational needs; carrying out national and international assessments of educational achievement and securely storing and reporting on these data; engaging in programme evaluations; conducting independent (self-) initiated research; building capacity; serving on national and international advisory bodies; providing consultancy services; and co-operating with other bodies as appropriate.

This report, which is being submitted by the Board of the Centre to the Minister for Education and Skills, in accordance with Section 52 of the Establishment Order, covers the year 2019.

## Strategic Plan

Establishing the [ERC's first Strategic Plan](#) was identified as a priority by the Board, and it was approved by the Board for publication (in March 2019) about seven months after the appointment of the new CEO (September 2018).

The Strategic Plan articulates its functions and objects in terms of a strategic vision - *Excellence in conducting and supporting educational research, evaluation and assessment* – and three-part mission:

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<sup>1</sup> In order to maintain continuity in services and relationships between the ERC and DCU including the newly-established Institute of Education, a two-year Transition Agreement (subsequently extended by one year) was drawn up. To protect the interests of ERC staff, a Staffing Agreement was drawn up and agreed by the DES, ERC, (then) St Patrick's College, and Irish Federation of University Teachers.

<sup>2</sup> See [SI 392/2015 Educational Research Centre \(Establishment\) Order 2015](#), and subsequent amendments in [SI 309/2017 Educational Research Centre \(Establishment\) \(Amendment\) Order 2017](#).

- To conduct and disseminate commissioned and independently initiated national and international research, assessment and evaluation studies that are timely, accessible and relevant, on all aspects of education, and at all levels of the education system
- To develop high quality assessments and provide strong assessment support services to schools and centres of education
- To collaborate with national and international bodies to share learning and to develop capacity and expertise in all of the aforementioned areas.

The plan was developed in consultation with all staff, the Board, and other Department of Education agencies and other stakeholders. The consultation process resulted in the identification of six values and five guiding principles, as listed below.

### **Values**

- We place a high value on the quality, relevance, accessibility and impact of our work
- We value the public trust and confidence placed in us and are committed to living up to that trust
- We value and respect learners, parents, educators and stakeholders, as well as each other
- We value investment in staff expertise, support and wellbeing
- We view teamwork, relationships and working collaboratively as essential
- We are committed to public service values.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Quality, relevance and impact
- Balance between sustainability and development
- Aligned with national priorities, informed by international developments
- Collaborative spirit in leadership and teamwork
- Inclusiveness and respect.

### **Phases and High-Level Objectives**

The Plan evolves over the three years, moving from *transition*, to *consolidation*, then to *development*.

Three high-level objectives are also identified in the Plan, cognisant of its 'young' statutory body status and recent and significant transitions:

- stabilise and enhance the ERC's staffing base and physical environment
- achieve a sustainable and strategic approach to test development/analysis and both commissioned and independently initiated research
- continue to build and enhance strong, transparent governance structures.

## Staff

In 2019, the ERC had sanction for 38.5 staff (35.15 whole-time equivalents and 3 project specified purpose contracts). The ERC has an executive team led by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dr Jude Cosgrove.

### Executive

Dr Jude Cosgrove	CEO
Dr Gerry Shiel	Research Fellow
Dr Eemer Eivers (Career Break from 01/09/2018)	Research Fellow
Dr Rachel Perkins	Research Fellow
Dr Aidan Clerkin	Research Fellow
Dr Lorraine Gilleece (Acting up)	Research Fellow
Dr David Millar (Career Break from 01/09/2019)	Research Fellow
Ms Anne Comey	Assistant Principal

The staff in 2019 was as follows:

### Research Staff

Dr Jude Cosgrove	CEO
Dr Gerry Shiel	Research Fellow
Dr Eemer Eivers (Career Break from 01/09/2018)	Research Fellow
Dr Rachel Perkins	Research Fellow
Dr Aidan Clerkin	Research Fellow
Dr Lorraine Gilleece (Acting Up)	Research Fellow
Dr David Millar (Career Break from 01/09/2019)	Research Fellow
Dr Mary Lewis	Research Associate
Dr Emer Delaney	Research Associate
Ms Rachel Cunningham	Research Associate
Ms Caroline Mc Keown	Research Associate
Dr Lauren Kavanagh (Career Break from 16/01/2019)	Research Associate
Dr Sean Close (Retired August 2019)	Research Associate
Mr Adrian O'Flaherty	Research Associate
Ms Sylvia Denner (Acting Up)	Research Associate
Ms Joanne Kiniry	Research Associate
Dr Brenda Donohue	Research Associate
Dr Sharon Nelis (From May 2019)	Research Associate
Dr Caroline Rawdon (From May 2019)	Research Associate
Ms Mary Delaney	Research Associate
Dr Lynsey O'Keefe (Acting up)	Research Associate
Ms Eva Moran	Research Assistant
Ms Emma Chubb (Finished February 2019)	Research Assistant
Ms Sarah McAteer	Research Assistant
Ms Fionnuala Short	Research Assistant
Ms Theresa Walsh	Research Assistant
Ms Emma Ní Churraíon	Research Assistant
Ms Alice Duggan	Research Assistant
Dr Caitriona Fitzgerald (From April 2019)	Research Assistant
Mr Conall Ó Duibhir (From April 2019)	Research Assistant
Dr Anastasios Karakolidis (From October 2019)	Research Assistant
Ms Kara Sampson (From May 2019)	Research Assistant
Mr Emmet Feerick (From June 2019)	Research Assistant

Ms Caitlin Myron (From May 2019)	Research Assistant
<b>IT &amp; Administrative Staff</b>	
Mr John Coyle	System Administrator
Ms Anne Comey	Assistant Principal
Ms Mary Rohan	Senior Administrator
Ms Patricia Gaffney	Higher Executive Officer
Ms Blána Kelly	Executive Officer
Ms Paula Chute (Finished February 2019)	Executive Officer
Ms Imelda Pluck	Executive Office
Mr Leo Devlin	Executive Officer
Ms Lynn Jackson (From June 2019)	Executive Officer

At December 31, 2019 staff level was 34.95 FTE.

Further information on staff of the ERC is available on our website at [www.erc.ie/about/staff](http://www.erc.ie/about/staff).

## Chapter 2: 2019 Work programme and outputs

A detailed Programme of Work of the ERC is described elsewhere (see <http://www.erc.ie/programme-of-work/>). The ERC is not presently conducting any research, evaluation or assessment at pre-primary or post-secondary levels, although it has done so in the past. However, it currently has a role in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) as the Irish representative on its International Governing Board.

Activities and work of the ERC can be grouped into seven strands:

1. Oversight, delivery and national reporting of large-scale international assessments<sup>3</sup>
2. Management, oversight and reporting of large-scale national assessments<sup>4</sup>
3. Contributing to policy on, and evaluation relating to, educational disadvantage
4. Test development, standardisation and support (in both paper and online formats)
5. Programme evaluation
6. Data analytic support<sup>5</sup>
7. Independently- (ERC-) initiated research.

A majority of studies undertaken by the ERC are on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Other studies are conducted on behalf of agencies of the Department, such as the NCCA or NCSE. The ERC frequently collaborates or works in partnership with other organisations and individuals on studies and also initiates its own strands of research.

This chapter provides a summary of the progress made with respect to the specific Actions set out in the ERC's Strategic Plan. Commentary is provided on Actions which have not been progressed as much as originally envisaged. It then lists a selection of research and test development/standardisation outputs.

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of progress on the Actions (relevant to 2019). Broadly speaking, actions have been progressed as planned for 2019. Five observations may be made in respect to 2019 where less progress was achieved than originally envisaged.

First, the IPA's review of ERC staffing and organisation, submitted to the Department in Spring 2019, has recommended staffing increases and some organisational enhancements; these occur as a consequence of the additional administrative, governance, financial and compliance functions and duties of the ERC as a statutory body and will take further time to address, monitor and review.

Related to the first point, the ERC's administrative team is under-staffed and some of the Actions as they relate to HR functions have not been achieved due to capacity issues; nonetheless, significant progress has been made in the areas of performance appraisal, professional development and recruitment.

Third, while research and data standards are generally high, there is a need for enhanced data governance and oversight; this need is also linked both to the first point and also with a need to modernise and upgrade some of the IT infrastructure and functions of the Centre.

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<sup>3</sup> Currently: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

<sup>4</sup> Chiefly, National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER).

<sup>5</sup> For example, ongoing analysis of TUSLA's attendance data and analytic input into the DES resource allocation model for special educational needs.

Fourth, while some progress has been made in the establishment of a longer-term service agreement with DCU, several of the issues, particularly pensions, are complex, and the ERC is working closely with the Department of Education and Skills for their resolution.

Finally, the status of the Test Department building is legally complex and characterised by interdependencies, so progress is likely to be slower than originally envisaged.

**Table 1. Review of ERC's activities in 2019 under strands and activities under the Strategic Plan 2019-2021**

Strand and action	Timeframe	Phase	Comment
<b>1: International assessment programme</b>			
1a: Maintain high standards in development, fieldwork, analysis and reporting	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019 with the need for improved data governance identified as a priority for 2020
1b: Successfully implement TIMSS 2019, PIRLS 2021 and PISA 2021	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019
1c: Initiate work on TIMSS 2023 and PISA 2024	Q1-Q2 2021	Further development	N/A
1d: Enhance reporting to better meet stakeholders' needs	Initial national reporting scheduled for Q4 2020 (TIMSS) and Q4 2022 (PIRLS and PISA)	Consolidation; Further development	N/A
1e: Establish the feasibility and value of participation in new international assessment programmes such as the International Computer Information Literacy Study (ICILS 2023)	2021	Further development	N/A
<b>2: National assessment programme</b>			
2a: Maintain high standards in development, fieldwork, analysis and reporting	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019
2b: Successfully manage the integration of aspects of the DEIS evaluation into NAMER 2020	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019: for the first time, the NAMER assessments are designed to provide robust representative data on DEIS primary schools
2c: Enhance reporting to better meet stakeholders' needs	Initial reporting scheduled for Q2 2021	Consolidation; Further development	N/A

Table 1 (continued).

Strand and action	Timeframe	Phase	Notes
<b>3: Test development, standardisation and support</b>			
3a: Successfully manage the transitions from old to new paper tests and from paper to online tests, including regular updating of existing tests, as needed	2019-2020	Transition	Achieved as planned in 2019: all tests, manuals and other resources finalised and printed; required changes to Test Department administrative and ordering processes achieved; extensive communications with schools completed; requisite updates to Department's systems conveyed and implemented In addition, standardisation study for the NEPS-developed diagnostic literacy test was completed (first years, Oct-Nov)
3b: Review and update our online testing platform, as required	Q2 2019-Q1 2020	Transition	N/A
3c: Undertake new test development work	2021	Further development	N/A
3d: Enhance engagement with test users (teachers, learners, principals, parents)	2021	Further development	Achieved as planned in 2019: 18 drop-in sessions for schools provided; ERC attended the IPPN annual conference (Jan) and IPPN professional briefing day (Sept) (exhibition stand, hands-on demo, presentation)
3e: Maintain and improve on test support to schools and other centres of education	2019-2020	Consolidation	Achieved as planned in 2019: ERC website restructured and phone and email support enhanced; upgrade of phone system achieved
3f: Establish rolling/ongoing test development and assessment strategy in consultation with stakeholders	Q1 2021	Further development	N/A

**Table 1 (continued).**

<b>Strand and action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Phase</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>4: Educational disadvantage</b>			
4a: Establish overall programme of work for 2019-2021 with reference to 2017 DEIS plan and targets and in consultation with relevant partners and agencies	Q1-2 2019	Transition	Achieved as planned in 2019: new research team for this strand successfully established and evaluating, analytic and technical strands identified and commenced
4b: Report on the achievements of DEIS learners drawing on DEIS/NAMER 2020	Initial reporting scheduled for Q2 2021	Further development	N/A
4c: Implement and report on the educational disadvantage programme of work	2020-2021	Consolidation; Further development	N/A
<b>5: Programme evaluation (new projects 2019-2021)</b>			
5a: Agree terms of reference for new programme evaluation studies	Q1 2019	Transition	Achieved for three new projects: national evaluation of Digital Learning Framework; evaluation of CPD in wellbeing; evaluation of Gaeltacht Recognition Scheme (each running for approximately three years)
5b: Successfully complete programme evaluation studies according to their respective terms of reference	2019-2021	Consolidation; Further development	Achieved as planned in 2019
5c: Identify links and common themes across evaluation studies to inform future work	2021	Further development	N/A

**Table 1 (continued).**

Strand and action	Timeframe	Phase	Notes
<b>6: Analysis, capacity building and skills development</b>			
6a: Building on the IPA staffing and organisational structure review and other sources (e.g. performance appraisals, staff consultation), establish a structured plan for capacity building and skills development	2019	Transition	Partially achieved and in progress: Annual appraisals which link with staff professional development successfully implemented; more resources provided for professional development; in-house capacity-building and mentoring functions enhanced
6b: Maintain high standards in existing projects that provide analytic support	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019
6c: Maintain support for existing PhD studies and existing strands of independently- (ERC-) initiated research	Ongoing	Ongoing	Currently, three ERC staff are undertaking PhD studies ( <a href="http://www.erc.ie/programme-of-work/independent-research/">http://www.erc.ie/programme-of-work/independent-research/</a> ); A conference on PISA process data was held in Dublin in collaboration with ETS
6d: Identify strategic opportunities for extending analytic support to other agencies	2020-2021	Further development	N/A
6e: Review ERC's analytic needs and priorities	Q3-4 2019	Transition	Partially achieved: Skills matrix established, needs identified, priorities in progress
6f: Establish ERC's analytic strategy, to include exploration of potential new data sources	Q2 2020	Further development	N/A

**Table 1 (continued).**

Strand and action	Timeframe	Phase	Notes
<b>7: Independent functions</b>			
7a: Identify ways to develop and support independently- (ERC-) initiated research particularly through secondary analysis (via ERC's analytic strategy, 6f)	2020-2021	Further development	N/A
7b: Actively seek/respond to opportunities for new strands of independently- (ERC-) initiated work in consultation and collaboration with national and international agencies	2020-2021	Further development	N/A
7c: Re-launch the Irish Journal of Education (IJE)	Q4 2020	Further development	N/A
7d: Increase publication and reach of ERC-initiated work (e.g. via conferences, national and international journal articles)	2020-2021	Consolidation; Further development	N/A
7e: Build ERC-initiated research more explicitly into programme of work through structured, timely planning of work commissioned by the DES and other agencies	Ongoing	Consolidation; Further development	Achieved as expected in 2019; ongoing sustained communication and planning required both internally and externally; strategic approach to identifying new opportunities and supporting existing strands in early stages
<b>8: Stakeholder consultation</b>			
8a: Through consultation with groups and agencies, obtain and collate views on the ERC's outputs (reports, presentations, etc.) and assessments	2019- 2020	Consolidation	Internal planning with senior management team begun but work not yet commenced
8b: In response to the consultations, build strategic priorities into planning on assessment and outputs.	2020	Further development	N/A
8c: Develop triennial stakeholder consultation strategy	2020	Further development	N/A

Table 1 (continued).

Strand and action	Timeframe	Phase	Notes
<b>9: Governance</b>			
9a: Establish long-term service agreement with DCU through tri-party agreement between DCU, ERC and the DES, taking into account the future development needs of the ERC	2019	Transition	Not achieved: See comments in accompanying text
9b: Secure longer-term status of Test Department	2019	Transition	Not achieved: See comments in accompanying text
9c: Respond strategically to IPA staffing review in the context of changes and developments in ERC's internal and external contexts	From Q1 2019	Transition; Consolidation	Partially achieved 2019: Business cases for additional staff submitted to Department with further internal review ongoing
9d: Enhance HR functions and conduct and respond to a full review of current processes to ensure alignment with best practice	2019	Transition	Partially achieved, with enhancements to specific areas including recruitment and professional development
9e: Raise awareness of the work of the ERC	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019: Website significantly restructured and redeveloped; structured and strategic approach to managing ERC Twitter account established and implemented; significant engagement with schools on ERC tests; structured approach/process with the Department for reporting established
9f: Continue to monitor compliance function in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019; gap analysis under the code of practice completed
9g: Improve risk registration and management through internal audit function	Ongoing	Consolidation	Achieved as planned in 2019; internal audit charter completed; risk register was reviewed and enhanced
9h: Continue to ensure regular review of financial activities in line with best practice	Ongoing	Ongoing	Achieved as planned in 2019; accounting policies approved; review of internal financial controls completed; improved management/process of income and expenditure monitoring established with Dept of Education

A summary of key research outputs achieved in 2019 under ERC's programme of work strands follows.

### **International assessment programme**

- TIMSS 2019 was successfully implemented in nationally representative samples of primary and post-primary schools, meeting the required international technical standards; data were submitted on schedule, and Ireland's contributions to TIMSS Encyclopaedia and Test-Curriculum Matching Analysis were also submitted on schedule.
- The national report for PISA 2018 was published on schedule (December) at the same time of the publication of the international results by the OECD and was well received. Prior to this, the necessary preparatory work with the DES and national committee was completed, and PISA staff attended a data analysis workshop organised by the PISA international study consortium to support them in the analyses for the national report.
- In 2018 the ERC also oversaw a second administration of PISA. Normally PISA takes place in the spring but since a majority of PISA students are in third year, this places additional burden on students and teachers in the approach to the Junior Certificate. The administration was conducted in autumn 2018 on a smaller but nonetheless representative sample and all data coding, processing and data quality checks were completed as planned in 2019, with reporting planned for 2020. The results of this will enable an evidence-based decision on the possible transition of national PISA testing to the autumn.
- Initial planning and development review work also commenced for PISA 2021 in 2019 in preparation for the field trial in 2020. All milestones, such as translation and adaptation of tests and questionnaires, and recruitment of field trial schools, were achieved as planned.
- Similarly, in 2019, initial planning and development review work also commenced for PIRLS 2021 in 2019 in preparation for the field trial in 2020. As with PISA 2021, all PIRLS 2021 activities were achieved as planned.
- The ERC continued to represent Ireland on the Board of Participating Countries on the OECD Programme for International Adult Assessment of Competencies (PIAAC) (with the study being implemented by the CSO in Ireland).

### **National assessment programme**

- The ERC has conducted national assessments of English reading and mathematics on behalf of the DES for many years, with the previous assessment in 2014. NAMER 2020, the ninth such national assessment, represents a development from 2014, and is directly linked to the Educational Disadvantage programme of work. Working with the Department, the ERC established a study design and budget that would permit robust estimates of the achievements and other outcomes in DEIS Band 1 and Band 2 schools.
- The ERC also oversaw the NAMER field trial, achieving high response rates, high quality data processing and coding, and the establishment of high quality main study versions of materials and procedures.

### **Test development, standardisation and support**

- 2019 represents the accumulation of a significant amount of test development and standardisation which commenced in 2015. Newly-developed reading and mathematics standardised tests for primary schools were finalised for both paper (first to sixth class) and online (third to sixth class) administration; and an online assessment of spatial reasoning for

first years, and online versions of reading and mathematics for second years in Irish were finalised.

- The Test Department has worked to ensure that the new tests are available to schools, while at the same time maintaining availability of the previous versions of the tests.
- The ERC conducted 18 drop-in sessions to raise awareness among schools of its tests, attended the IPPN annual conference in January and IPPN professional briefing day in September (which involved hands-on demo of ERC's new online tests and a presentation on the ERC tests at the September event).
- The section of the ERC website for ERC's tests has been restructured and enhanced for schools, with continuous monitoring of dedicated email accounts to address queries. The ERC's new phone system also provides an improved process for directing queries to the relevant staff.
- Working with NEPS, the standardisation of a new diagnostic test of reading literacy was completed with first years in autumn 2019.
- The procurement of a new online assessment platform for ERC's online tests commenced.

### **Programme evaluation (new projects)**

The terms of reference and project plans for three new multi-year projects were established, with work begun on all three:

- Teachers' professional learning (TPL) framework evaluation (with a focus on wellbeing): This study comprises three phases with the overall objective of producing a descriptive and evaluative framework for TPL in Ireland – a multi-strand literature review, a representative survey of principal and teachers, and an in-depth 'case' analysis of specific TPL in the area of wellbeing. The literature review is planned for publication towards the end of 2020. The study is due to conclude towards the end of 2021.
- Longitudinal evaluation of the Digital Learning Framework (DLF): This is a mixed-methods longitudinal study combining surveys and focus groups/interviews. With the support of the PDST Technology in Education team, the baseline survey was administered as part of the initial DLF seminars for schools, and a baseline report was published at the end of 2019. In later phases of the study, follow-up surveys and qualitative interviews, including interviews with students, will culminate in a final report containing recommendations to the DES. The study is expected to be complete towards the end of 2022.
- Measúnú ar an Scéim Aitheantais Scoileanna Gaeltachta/Gaeltacht Recognition Scheme (GRS) evaluation: The Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme arises from the Department of Education and Skill's Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 (DES, 2016), which, in turn, draws on the Government's 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (Government of Ireland, 2010). The study, which runs until around the end of 2022, is longitudinal and uses mixed methods: survey questionnaires, assessment, and case studies. The tests to be administered combine existing instruments (post-primary) and the development of new tests (primary), which include speaking and listening tests.

### **Data analytic support**

- The annual attendance report for 2016-2017 was submitted to Tusla, with planning for the development of enhanced reporting for subsequent years to include student level data in progress for reporting in 2020.

- Work in 2019 concerning special education resource allocation on behalf of the Department was focused on the establishment of an SNA model. Updates to the models are envisaged for 2020/2021.

More information on these studies is at <https://www.erc.ie/programme-of-work/>.

#### **Independent (ERC-initiated) research**

- [PhD candidates](#) working at the Centre have continued to progress on their research in three areas relating to assessment: online and paper-based science assessment in PISA with a focus on validity; an analysis of achievement and engagement in spring and autumn on PISA; and an analysis of inference skills through the application of a cognitive model to large scale national assessment data.
- The ERC also successfully hosted a conference in May in collaboration with the Educational Testing Service (ETS, USA) on the use of process data in large-scale international assessment. Copies of the programme and presentations are available on the [conference web page](#). The ERC is proud to have contributed to this event which represents a new and fast-growing area of research in education and assessment.

## Publications, Conferences and Presentations 2019

Many of these publications are available for download at

<http://www.erc.ie/2019/02/20/publications-2019/>

### Reports

- Clerkin, A. (2019). *The Transition Year experience: Student perceptions and school variation*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Cosgrove, J., Moran, E., Feerick, E., & Duggan, A. (2019). *Digital Learning Framework (DLF) national evaluation: Starting off – Baseline Report*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Cosgrove, J., & Gilleece, L. (2019a, September). Comparison of options for the identification of primary and post-primary schools for inclusion in DEIS: Independent technical evaluation by the Educational Research Centre. *Unpublished report submitted to the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Skills*.
- Gilleece, L., & Cosgrove, J. (2019b, November). Further examination of options for the identification of schools for inclusion in DEIS (Primary level): Independent technical evaluation by the Educational Research Centre. *Unpublished report submitted to the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Skills*.
- Gilleece, L., & Cosgrove, J. (2019c, November). Further examination of options for the identification of schools for inclusion in DEIS (Post-primary level): Independent technical evaluation by the Educational Research Centre. *Unpublished report submitted to the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Skills*.
- Kennedy, E., & Shiel, G. (2019). *Writing pedagogy in the senior primary classes. Knowledge, skills and processes for writing*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- McKeown, C., Denner, S., McAteer, S., & Shiel, G., with O'Keefe, L. (2019). *Learning for the future: The performance of 15-year-olds in Ireland on reading literacy, science and mathematics in PISA 2018*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- McKeown, C., Denner, S., McAteer, S., & Shiel, G., with O'Keefe, L. (2019). *Learning for the future: The performance of 15-year-olds in Ireland on reading literacy, science and mathematics in PISA 2018*.; Executive Summary Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

### Articles

- Clerkin, A. (2019). A three-wave longitudinal assessment of socioemotional development in a year-long school-based 'gap year'. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*.
- Clerkin, A. (2019). What do we know about Transition Year? Looking to the future. (Senior Cycle Review discussion paper). Dublin: ERC and NCCA.
- Kavanagh, L. (2019). Academic self-concept formation: testing the internal/external frame of reference model, big-fish-little-pond model, and an integrated model at the end of primary school. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*.
- Kavanagh, L. (2019). Relations between children's reading motivation, activity and performance at the end of primary school. *Journal of Research in Reading*

### Conference

- *Opportunity versus Challenge: Exploring Usage of Log-File and Process Data in International Large Scale Assessments*, Dublin, May. International Research Conference co-hosted by ERC and ETS (USA). Programme and presentations available at the [ERC conference page](#).

## Conference Presentations

- Denner, S. (2019). Teacher and principals' views on educational outcomes of 15-year-old students measured at different times of the year. *Poster presentation, AEA-Europe conference*, Lisbon, November.
- McKeown, C. & Denner, S. (2019). The Test-Taking Behaviour of Irish Students in PISA 2015 and 2018: student engagement, effort and concentration in computer-based assessment. *Conference presentation, AEA-Europe conference*, Lisbon, November.
- Kiniry J., Van den Broek P.W. & Raijmakers M. (2019). The study of cognitive reading skill using data collected by a large-scale assessment of English reading. Presentation at the *29th annual meeting of the Society for Text and Discourse*, New York, July.
- Kiniry J., Van den Broek P.W. & Raijmakers M. (2019). The Study of Cognitive Reading Skill Using Data Collected by a Large-Scale Assessment of English Reading in K. Thums (Chair). Large Scale Assessments for Reading Research. Symposium presentation at the *29th annual meeting of the Society for Text and Discourse*, New York, July.
- Kiniry J. & Van den Broek P.W. (2019). Inference and vocabulary in a reading comprehension assessment. *Poster presented at the 29th annual meeting of the Society for Text and Discourse*, New York, July.

## Manuals for ERC's Tests

- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Level 1-5 (Screening Test)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Level 2 (Paper version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Levels 3-6 (Paper version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test: Administration Manual. Levels 3-6 (Computer version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Level 1-5 (Screening Test)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Level 2 (Paper version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test: Administration and Interpretation Manual. Levels 3-6 (Paper version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Educational Research Centre (2019). *New Drumcondra Primary Reading Test: Administration Manual. Levels 3-6 (Computer version)*. Dublin: Author.
- Foras Taighde ar Oideachas (2019). *Triail Nua Mhatamaitice Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna: Lámhleabhar Riaracháin. Leibhéal 1-6 (Leagan Páipéir)*. Baile Átha Cliath: Údar.
- Foras Taighde ar Oideachas (2019). *Triail Nua Mhatamaitice Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna: Lámhleabhar Riaracháin. Leibhéal 3-6 (Ar Líne)*. Baile Átha Cliath: Údar.

## Chapter 3: Governance

The ERC progresses its work through both its Board and its Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

### Governing Board

The ERC has a Board of 5 members appointed by the Minister. The ERC has a vacancy for a Board member since September 2018 and is seeking a replacement with financial expertise through the Public Appointments Service.

#### Board

Chairperson	Dr Pauric Travers
Deputy Chairperson	Dr Denise Burns
Board member	Dr Michael Martin
Board Member	Mr Edward Murtagh
Board Member	[Vacancy since September 2018]

The Board holds office for a term of five years, completing its first term in 2021.

The Board exercises reserved functions by which it establishes the policy framework within which the executive of the ERC operates. The reserved functions include risk management and financial control. The Board delegates operational responsibility for the day-to-day running of the ERC to the Chief Executive Officer and the ERC's executive team. In order to fulfil its reserved functions, the Board receives regular reports from the ERC's management team and keeps itself up to date about strategic issues and changes affecting the ERC and the environment in which it operates.

The Board advises and supports the Chief Executive Officer and management.

Board members look to satisfy themselves that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible.

The following are matters for decision by the Board:

- significant acquisitions, disposals and retirement of assets of the ERC
- major investments and capital projects
- delegated authority levels, treasury policy and risk management policies
- approval of terms of major contracts
- assurances of compliance with statutory and administrative requirements in relation to the approval of the appointment, number, grading, and conditions of all staff, including remuneration and superannuation
- approval of annual budgets and corporate plans
- approval of annual reports and financial statements
- appointment, remuneration and assessment of the performance of, and succession planning for the CEO
- significant amendments to the pension benefits of the CEO and staff.

Attendance at Board meeting by Board members in 2019 was as follows:

- Dr Pauric Travers: 6/6
- Dr Denise Burns: 6/6
- Mr Michael Martin: 6/6
- Mr Edward Murtagh: 5/6

Meetings are attended by the CEO and the Assistant Principal who is Secretary to the Board. Other staff join meetings as appropriate. The Board meets at least twice a year without ERC staff members present. Board members communicate with each other between meetings when required.

Minutes from Board meetings are published on the ERC website ([www.erc.ie](http://www.erc.ie)). Any commercially sensitive information and personal matters are removed from the ERC Board minutes before publishing.

The Board is authorised to seek the information it requires from the ERC in order to perform its duties. It is authorised to obtain, at ERC expense, outside legal and other professional advice where Board Members judge it necessary to discharge their responsibilities.

The Board endeavours to keep the Minister for Education and Skills informed of matters arising within the ERC.

The Board has continued its implementation of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (COP) 2016 and reports regularly to its parent Department, the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The ERC reviewed its level of compliance with the COP late in 2019 by issuing a document listing any exemptions or phasing in of certain requirements.

### **Audit and Risk Committee**

Since its establishment in May 2017 with Mr Edward Murtagh as Chairperson, the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) has been reviewing systems of internal control, external and internal audit, risk management and financial control.

The ARC is required to brief the Board at least four times a year. The ARC met four times in 2019.

The Committee's membership comprises all members of the Board. The ARC also appointed an additional member with governance expertise in November 2019.

Attendance for 2019 ARC meetings is as follows:

- Mr Edward Murtagh: 4/4
- Dr Denise Burns 4/4
- Dr Pauric Travers: 4/4
- Prof Michael Martin: 4/4
- Mr Ray Mooney (from November 2019): 1/4

In 2019 the ARC has continued working on improving the ERC's internal audit and risk functions. ARC work in 2019 has largely centred on its internal audit function and a number of processes and policies guided by the work of the ARC were adopted. The internal audit programme for the year included Financial Internal Control, Recruitment and Project Administration audits. The finding will be considered in any process and policy updates.

The ARC also continues to put data protection as a core item of its meetings. Work on updating and improving its risk function is planned for 2021.

Work on a long term agreement with DCU to replace the transition agreement between the ERC and St Patrick's College (and subsequently DCU) which expired in September 2018 is ongoing.

## Governance highlights 2019 and priorities for 2020

Key achievements overseen by the Board and ARC during 2019 include:

- The ERC's first Strategic Plan 2019-2021 was published
- ERC's accounting policies, procurement plan, internal audit charter and some HR policies were approved
- A review of internal financial controls, recruitment processes and project administration processes were completed
- ERC's data security and privacy policies were developed and approved, and processes for DPIA, DSA and DPA established
- The risk register was reviewed and recommendations for enhancements to the register were implemented
- The ERC's Senior Management Team was formalised
- Necessary clarifications concerning income and expenditure were secured from the Department
- A Gap Analysis under the 2016 Code of Practice was completed
- Available pension data were compiled and an external supplier provided pension statements for ERC staff on the Single Scheme
- A longer-term solution for payroll processing was identified
- A review by the IPA of staffing and organisation was approved: this identified a need for a deputy CEO, IT manager, and additional administrative staff
- Issues relating to temporary posts were addressed.

The Board has identified the following as priorities for 2020:

- The filling of the current vacancy on the Board by a member with financial expertise
- The recruitment process for both Board and ARC members in view of the expiry of the appointment of most positions by Summer 2021
- The establishment of a longer-term service-level agreement with DCU
- Further improvements to the ERC's IT infrastructure and governance
- Review and improvement of the ERC's risk policy and processes.

## Financial Statement 2019 and related disclosures

The financial position of the ERC is as disclosed in our 2019 annual accounts, audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General in 2020. The accounts were drafted by:

HSM Ashbourne  
Chartered Accountants  
2A Ashbourne Court  
Ashbourne  
Co. Meath  
Ireland

and audited by

Comptroller and Auditor General  
3A Mayor St Upper  
Dublin 1,  
D01PF72

The ERC's accounting years follow calendar years.

The ERC issued draft unaudited accounts to its parent department, the Department of Education and Skills in Q1 2020 before audit from the Comptroller and Auditors General.

The ERC will publish on its website its annual report no later than one month following completion of the audit of its financial statements by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The ERC can confirm that it complies with:

- Its obligations under tax law (the ERC has been in regular contact with Revenue during this period of transition)
- The relevant aspects of the Public Spending Code
- The Government travel policy.

The Board has put in place processes to ensure an effective system of internal control. The ERC is a small organisation and has no capacity to conduct its own internal audits. Those are therefore conducted by external third party suppliers. The ERC is continuously updating its processes to fit its specific requirements<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Where processes and policies have not yet been updated to fit the ERC's specific requirements it should be understood that the policies relevant to St Patrick's College and the ERC prior to September 2015 are to be used to fulfil this purpose.

## Financial Disclosures

(All figures quoted below are included in a number of headings on the financial statements.)

Although the ERC is not a commercial entity, its test department sells standardised tests to schools. No commercially significant developments affected the ERC in 2019.

### 1. DETAILS OF EXPENDITURES ON EXTERNAL CONSULTANCY/ADVISER FEES

Legal fees	112,860.89
Accountancy	38,295.00
Professional Fees (Graphic Design)	29,183.56
Consultancy (IT Audit & Actuarial)	61,678.21
<b>Total:</b>	<b>242,017.66</b>

### 2. DETAILS OF PAY BILLS

Government pay guidelines on the pay of the CEO and ERC employees are complied with.

Overall payroll costs for 2019: €1,909,155

ERC Staff: €1,742,714

ERC Casual staff for project work: €166,441

Details of the number of employees whose total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) **for the reporting period** fell within each pay band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards

PAY BAND	Total number of employees whose benefits for the <b>12 months</b> fell within the pay band
60,001 - 70,000	3
70,001 - 80,000	2
80,001 - 90,000	-
90,000 - 100,000	-
100,001 - 110,000	-
110,001 - 120,000	1
120,001 - 130,000	-

Pension contributions were made for staff members of the Single Pensions schemes. For the 12 month-period the total is €35,959.51, and covers 24 members of staff. All contributions were made to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Staff members of the St Patrick's College Pensions scheme were deducted pensions contributions. However, contributions are not included in the pay budget and the money is not paid into a specific fund. Dublin City University (DCU) is responsible for the payment of pensions (including payment of lump sums) for the duration of the transition agreement which lapsed in September 2018. Interim arrangements are in place and a longer-term formal arrangement is actively being sought by the ERC working closely with the Department of Education and Skills and DCU.

### 3. DETAILS OF COMPENSATION TO KEY MANAGEMENT

- No member of the Board received Board fees.
- Prof Michael Martin who is residing in the USA attends Board and ARC meetings by remote video conferencing.
- Mr Edward Murtagh received payment of €410 and vouched expenses of €593 for his work on a project of the ERC. This payment is entirely separate from his work as ERC Governing Board member.
- The CEO remuneration package amounted to €119,514. The CEO also received vouched expenses relating to national and international travel of €4,952.07.
- Research Fellows and Senior Administrator received a total payment of €10,839.13 for vouched expenses in relation to National and International travels and various project and office related expenditures. This figure is included in the travel and subsistence expenses quoted below.
- Post-employment benefits:
  - One pension lump sums was issued for ERC staff in 2019 through DCU and pension monthly payments were carried out by DCU.
  - No added years were granted for pension purposes nor was there a case of retirement without normal actuarial reductions.

### 4. TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE

#### **Project related:**

National travel:	€ 12,166.95
International travel:	€ 49,851.94

#### **Non-project related:**

National:	€ 574.97
International:	€ 4,377.10

Total:	€ 71,777.64
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### 5. HOSPITALITY

Total hospitality expenditure for 12 months:	€ 1,485.04
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#### Includes:

- Catering for ERC events and staff training related costs: € 409.30
- Meeting catering: € 1,075.74

### 6. ICT

#### **Project related:**

Hardware:	Níl
Online programme:	€ 23,125.77
Survey Administration and Technical Support:	Níl

#### **Non project related:**

Hardware:	€ 573.49 (€48,725.59 capitalised)
Software:	€ 29,115.03
Maintenance:	€ 14,980.14
Other:	€ 4,634.66

### 7. PUBLICATIONS

**Irish Journal of Education:**

IJE/Publication Sales:	Níl
JStor Online Journal Sales:	€ 1,788.73
Total publications sales:	€ 1,788.73
Printing Costs IJE:	Níl

**Book and journal purchases:**

Books expenditure:	€ 1,444.17
Journal expenditure:	€ 30,324.42

The ERC's Financial Statement inclusive of the C&AG report and the Statement on Internal Control for 2019 is available in Appendix 2.

The ERC Report on Protected Disclosure is in Appendix 3.

## Appendix 1: Non-exhaustive list of activities consistent with the furtherance of the objects of the Centre Functions of the Centre

1. Enabling schools to assess the attainment levels and academic standards of students as required under Section 9(k) of the Education Act, 1998
2. Enabling schools to report systematically on the attainment levels and academic standards of students to parents, students, boards of management, the Minister for Education and Skills and others
3. Assisting schools to identify the special educational needs of individual students
4. Providing advice to schools and centres for education on the assessment of the attainment levels and academic standards of students
5. Carrying out national and international assessments of the attainment levels and academic achievement of students and reporting on such assessments to the Minister
6. Maintaining, storing securely and publishing information on the attainment levels and academic standards of students in schools and centres for education in Ireland
7. Engaging in the evaluation of educational programmes and activities
8. Initiating and conducting research consistent with the objects of the Centre, and publishing and disseminating the findings of this research
9. Building capacity for educational assessment and research in Ireland by making provision for the professional development of staff of the Centre and by providing to others training in, and advice on, areas of its competence
10. Serving on national and international bodies of relevance to the Centre
11. Co-operating with other bodies, as appropriate, in research, assessment and evaluation studies and in the dissemination of findings concerning research, assessment and evaluation
12. Providing consultancy services
13. Co-operating with other bodies, as appropriate

Appendix 2: Financial Statement and Statement on Internal Control

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**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED**  
**31 DECEMBER 2019**

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## **EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

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**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**  
**BOARD MEMBERS AND OTHER INFORMATION**

**Board Members**

Dr Pauric Travers  
Dr Denise Burns  
Prof Michael Martin  
Mr Edward Murtagh

**Business Address**

DCU, St Patrick's College Campus  
Drumcondra  
Dublin 9, D09AN2F

**Auditors**

Comptroller and Auditor General  
3A Mayor St Upper  
Dublin 1, D01PF72

**Bankers**

Allied Irish Banks PLC  
140 Lr. Drumcondra Road  
Dublin 9

**Solicitors**

Eversheds  
1 Earlsfort Centre  
Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2

O Connell Brennan  
Armitage House  
10 Lr Hatch St  
Dublin 2

Mason Hayes and Curran  
South Bank House  
Barrow Street  
Dublin 4

## **EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

### **GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORT** for the year ended 31 December 2019

#### **Governance**

The Board of the Educational Research Centre was established under the Educational Research Centre (Establishment) Order, 2015. The functions of The Board are set out in section 45 of this Act. The Board is accountable to the Minister for Education and Skills and is responsible for ensuring good governance and performs this task by setting strategic objectives and targets and taking strategic decisions on all key business issues. The regular day-to-day management, control and direction of the Educational Research Centre are the responsibility of the CEO and the senior management team. The CEO and the senior management team must follow the broad strategic direction set by The Board, and must ensure that all members of the Board have a clear understanding of the key activities and decisions related to the entity, and of any significant risks likely to arise. The CEO acts as a direct liaison between The Board and management of the Educational Research Centre.

#### **Responsibilities of the Board**

The work and responsibilities of the Board are set out in its Terms of Reference which also contain the matters specifically reserved for decision of The Board. Standing items considered by The Board include:

- Governance matters including internal policies;
- Delegated authority levels and risk management policies;
- Finance / Accounts including □approval of annual budgets and corporate plans;
- Appointment, remuneration and assessment of the performance of, and succession planning for, the CEO;
- Reports from Audit and Risk Committees and internal audits;
- Staffing; and
- Declarations of interest.

Section 45 of the Educational Research Centre Order, 2015 requires The Board to keep, in such form as may be approved by the Minister for Education and Skills with consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, all proper and usual accounts of all money received and expended by it.

In preparing these financial statements, The Board is required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that it will continue in operation; and
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Board is responsible for keeping adequate accounting records, which disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, its financial position and enable it to ensure that the financial statements comply with Section 47 of the Educational Research Centre Order, 2015.

The Board is responsible for approving the annual plan and budget. An evaluation of the performance of the Centre (actual performance against plan/budget required by the Code of Practice para 1.19) by reference to the annual plan and budget was carried out on 4 December 2019 by the Audit and Risk Committee who reported findings to the Board. Following this the Board and ARC are issued with a financial report at each meeting.

The Board is also responsible for safeguarding its assets and hence for taking reasonable steps to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

The Board considers that the financial statements of the Educational Research Centre give a true and fair view of the financial performance and the financial position of the ERC at 31 December 2019.

#### **The Board Structure**

The Board consists of a Chairperson and four ordinary members, all of whom are appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills. The members of The Board were appointed for a period of 5 years and meet at least 6 times per year. In September 2018 one member resigned and the ERC is awaiting appointment of a successor. The ERC had only four Board members for the entire 2019 period but received confirmation from the DES that an appointment will follow soon. Given that the current Board's

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORT for the year ended 31 December 2019

membership will expire in July 2021, it is unclear whether all appointments and reappointments will be dealt with at the same time.

The table below details the appointment period for current members:

Board Member	Role	Date appointed
Dr Pauric Travers	Chairperson	05/07/2016
Dr Denise Burns	Ordinary Member	05/07/2016
Prof Michael Martin	Ordinary Member	05/07/2016
Mr Edward Murtagh	Ordinary Member	05/07/2016

The Board commenced an external Board Effectiveness and Evaluation Review in February 2020 which was completed on 20 February 2020.

The Board has established one committee, as follows:

**1. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC):** comprises four members of the Board and one independent member appointed in Q4 2019. The role of the ARC is to support the Board in relation to its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurances. The ARC is independent from the financial management of the organisation. In particular, the ARC ensures that the internal control systems including audit activities are monitored actively and independently. The ARC reports directly to the Board after each meeting. A formal annual draft written report to the Board, for the year 2019, was reviewed in December 2019 for issue at the first Board meeting of 2020.

The members of the Audit and Risk Committee are: Mr Edward Murtagh (Chairperson), Dr Denise Burns, Prof Michael Martin, Dr Pauric Travers and Mr Ray Mooney. There were 4 meetings of the ARC in 2019.

#### Schedule of Attendance, Fees and Expenses

The Board Members do not receive a fee. A schedule of attendance at the Board and Committee meetings for 2019 is set out below including the expenses received by each member:

Number of Meetings	The Board	ARC	Expenses 2019
	€		
Dr Pauric Travers	6	4	-
Mr Edward Murtagh <sup>1</sup>	5	4	-
Dr Denise Burns	6	4	-
Prof Michael Martin	6	4	-
Mr Ray Mooney	N/A	1	-

#### Disclosures Required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016)

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the ERC has complied with the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies ("the Code"), as published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in August 2016. The following disclosures are required by the Code:

<sup>1</sup> Mr Edward Murtagh received payment of €410.40 and vouched expenses of €593 for his work on a project of the ERC. This payment is entirely separate from his work as ERC Governing Board member.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORT for the year ended 31 December 2019

<i>Consultancy Costs – See Note 7</i>	€
Legal fees	112,860
Accountancy	38,295
Professional Fees	29,184
Consultancy (IT Audit & Actuarial)	<u>61,678</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>242,018</b>

#### *Legal Costs and Settlements*

There were no legal costs or settlements other than the legal fees disclosed above.

#### *Travel and Subsistence Expenditure*

Travel and subsistence expenditure is categorised as follows:

	2019	2018
Domestic		
- Board	-	3,777
- Employees	13,401	47,518
International		
- Board	-	850
- Employees	58,376	38,563
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,777</b>	<b>93,374</b>

CEO travel expenses included above are as follows:

National: €575

International: €4,377

#### *Hospitality Expenditure*

The Income and Expenditure Account includes the following hospitality expenditure:

	2019	2018
Staff hospitality	409	370
Client hospitality	1,076	1,468
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>1,838</b>

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORT for the year ended 31 December 2019

#### Statement of Compliance

The Board has adopted the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) and has put procedures in place to ensure compliance with the Code. The ERC has been working towards full compliance since its inception in October 2015 and issued a gap analysis of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016) to its overseeing section of its parent department in November 2019. This document has since then been discussed in Governance meetings and accepted by the Central policy Unit and will act as a guide document for identifying and charting progress on issues going forward. Work continues on matters such as internal audits, risk management, IT and HR policies. The Board has been informed it can expect confirmation from the ERC's parent department of the appointment of a fifth member. The Audit and Risk Committee has had a new member with financial expertise since Q4 2019. Discussions on the long term replacement to the transition agreement between the ERC and DCU took place in December 2019 and February 2020 with a third meeting planned for Q4 2020. Discussions have progressed with the DES in relation to this longer term agreement with a particular focus on pensions and it is planned to have a comprehensive Service Level Agreement in 2020. A meeting took place in April 2020 but unfortunately progress on this item has been minimal due to the closure of DCU and the ERC as a result of Covid 19. Discussions resumed in October 2020.

*Jude Cosgrove*

Jude Cosgrove (Dec 14, 2020 15:14 GMT)

**Dr Jude Cosgrove**  
CEO

Date: Dec 14, 2020

*Pauric Travers*

**Dr Pauric Travers**  
Chairman

Date: Dec 14, 2020

## **EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

### **STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL** **for the year ended 31 December 2019**

#### **Scope of Responsibility**

On behalf of the Educational Research Centre I acknowledge the Board's responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal control is implemented, monitored and maintained, with improvements as required. This responsibility takes account of the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

#### **Purpose of the System of Internal Control**

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a tolerable level rather than to eliminate it. The system can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely way.

The system of internal control, which accords with guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, has been in place in the ERC for the year ended 31 December 2019 and up to the date of approval of the financial statements, except for the internal control issues outlined below.

#### **Capacity to Handle Risk**

The ERC has an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) comprising of 4 Board members, one of whom is the Chair and one external member with financial and audit expertise. The ARC met four times in 2019.

The Audit and Risk Committee operates within the principles of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and oversees the ERC's internal Audit function.

Since its implementation, the ARC has been working towards:

- Ensuring risk assessment identification, monitoring and mitigation processes are put in place within the organisation to identify the nature, extent and financial implications of risks facing the ERC.
- Assessing the likelihood of identified risks occurring.
- Assessing the ERC's ability to manage and mitigate the risks that do occur.
- Implementing a strategic plan (issued in March 2019) which will be subject to regular reviews of both short and long term goals and an evaluation of the risks to bringing those plans to fruition.

In 2019, the Audit and Risk Committee examined internal audits relevant to Financial Internal Control, Recruitment and Project Administration as well as the findings of the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) audits for the Financial Year 2018.

The internal audit of financial controls was carried out in September 2019 and therefore covered the first nine months of 2019. From 2020, internal audits of internal controls will be carried out after a full financial year has elapsed which means the next internal audit for financial internal controls will be carried out in early 2021. The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the findings of two of the internal audits at its meeting of 4 December 2019. The auditor's report on Project Administration was received in January 2020 and reviewed during the first meeting of the ARC on 21 February 2020. The ARC also reviewed the findings of the C&AG management letter relating to 2018 accounts at its meeting of 25 September 2019 and was presented with a verbal report by the C&AG at its meeting of 4 December 2019.

Due to ongoing unresolved issues with payroll, which are now largely addressed through the identification and first payroll run by a third party supplier in January 2020, the audit of payroll which had been recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee was not carried out in 2019.

Following the recommendation of external and internal auditors, a suite of accounting policies and financial processes was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board and approved on 13 February 2019. These policies and processes will continue to be updated as required from the findings of future audits.

The various audits, as well as regular project status reports by the Centre's Project Managers, have served to populate the risk register for the organisation and define the programme of work for the coming year. This has helped put in place appropriate corrective actions and determine the programme of audits to be carried out for 2020.

The ERC has Terms of Reference for the Board as well as a Code of Conduct for Board members and employees which sets out the agreed standards of principles and practice in relation to confidentiality and conflicts of interest. The Board reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee in December 2019 to allow for the revision of appointment terms following the inclusion of a new member.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL for the year ended 31 December 2019

The Protected Disclosure Policy was adopted on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2018 and the anti-fraud policy on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2018. The protected disclosure report for 2019 is available on the ERC website.

In light of the General Data Protection Regulation which came into effect in May 2018, the ERC has reviewed its internal practices in relation to data gathering and has worked to put in place an appropriate framework (supported by workflows and processes) to ensure it complies with the Data Protection Acts. As part of this framework, the ERC has put in place or reviewed existing systems and controls to restrict access to confidential data, and record the steps taken to ensure the protection of personal data. A suite of policies and forms relevant to data protection requirements are available on the ERC website, where other processes and relevant policies are being considered. Should the ERC become aware of actual or potential breaches to confidential data, these will be fully investigated and where necessary reported to the appropriate authorities.

#### Risk and Control Framework

The ERC has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

The ERC's risk register was completed in December 2018 and reviewed by the ARC on 6 March 2019. This register is reviewed and managed by the CEO and the Audit and Risk Committee, who in turn inform the Board. Through open discussions with both the Audit and Risk Committee and its Board the ERC is confident that information relating to risk is accurately conveyed to members. However it also acknowledges that further improvements are required in relation to the formalisation of this item and will continue in its efforts to implement and improve processes in relation to risk assessment.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff. I confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- procedures for all key business financial and processes have been documented,
- documentation of key Governance and HR processes are in progress,
- financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability
- there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management
- there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the information and communication technology systems and
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

#### Ongoing Monitoring and Review

Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes. Control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action, and to management and the Board, where relevant, in a timely way. The following ongoing monitoring systems are in place:

- key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies,
- reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned, and
- there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual performance and financial reports which indicate performance against budgets/forecasts.

A number of risks previously identified by C&AG have been addressed, including payroll administration and management of significant end of year funding levels. In governance meetings with CPU, the ERC have discussed a plan on how to best establish clarity on pension liability and associated risks, which is expected, with the support of the DES, to enable the establishment of a SLA with DCU.

The ERC has been assured that the appointment of an additional Board member is expected in 2020. ERC senior management regularly meets with DCU to discuss issues as they arise, including any relating to transition and lease arrangements.

Other items such as the alignment of the accounting systems are being addressed through the development of a business case, presented, discussed and agreed with CPU in the DES in 2020.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL for the year ended 31 December 2019

#### Procurement

The ERC adheres to relevant public procurement policies and where issues have been identified, work carried out to rectify them. One such issue has been identified in relation to the supply of answer sheets in 2019 where the level of purchase went over the threshold for tendering by a small amount and the ERC will work on identifying potential weaknesses in the processes which may have led to same. The ERC is working with the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), where frameworks are in place to identify services. However the ERC has also had to run a number of procurement tenders directly to market. The ERC is currently working on its 2019-2021 procurement plan and so far has experienced major delays on one item (Legal services). The ERC worked with the OGP in 2020 to run a tender via an existing framework. The competition was finalised in November 2020 and the contract is expected to be signed before year end 2020. The aims of the plan are to set a purchasing/procurement strategy relevant to ERC requirements over the stated period of time with regular reviews of its implementation and effectiveness. Due to a range of new standardised tests available to market for the first time in 2018-2019 and the high volume of demand which ensued, the printing costs for the ERC were higher than expected in 2019 resulting in a printing framework which will need to be reviewed earlier than planned. The ERC has already approached the OGP in relation to this matter.

Application of the DPER circular 02/16: arrangements for Digital and ICT related Expenditure in the Civil and Public Service resulted in delays for the procurement of IT services for some time sensitive project as this will have to be monitored carefully going forward.

#### Review of Effectiveness

The Board has continued to develop its structure in line with the Code of Practice (COP) for the Governance of State Bodies 2016 and working towards full implementation. Following formal implementation of its internal audit structure and the gap analysis conducted issued to its parent department in November 2019, it fully adopted the code in 2019.

I confirm that the ERC has implemented procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The ERC's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the Audit and Risk Committee which oversees their work, and the senior management within the ERC responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the findings of the financial internal controls audit carried out in September 2019 as well as the findings from the C&AG audit of the 2018 Financial Statements (signed off in July 2019) and its management letter. The Committee reviewed reports issued by the internal auditors. It identified and monitored the implementation of work towards corrective measures for any deficiencies or weaknesses identified and this was then incorporated into the governance action plan which is the main driver for remediation works for corporate governance failings.

The ARC reported to the Board the findings of the internal and external audits, including the internal audit of financial controls in place at year end 2019, on 20 February 2020 and progress made to date.

On behalf of the Board of the ERC, I, the undersigned Chairman of the Board, confirm that, in respect of the year ended 31 December 2019, the Board, following recommendations from the Audit and Risk Committee, have conducted a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

Signed on behalf of the Board:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr Pauric Travers**  
**Chairman**

Date: Dec 14, 2020

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL for the year ended 31 December 2019



## Ard Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste Comptroller and Auditor General

### Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas Educational Research Centre

#### Opinion on the financial statements

I have audited the financial statements of the Educational Research Centre for the year ending 31 December 2019 as required under the provisions of the Educational Research Centre (Establishment) Order 2015. The financial statements comprise

- the statement of income and expenditure
- the statement of comprehensive income
- the statement of financial position
- the statement of cash flows and
- the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Educational Research Centre at 31 December 2019 and of its income and expenditure for 2019 in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 — *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland*.

#### *Emphasis of matter – deferred pension funding asset*

Without qualifying my opinion on the financial statements, I draw attention to note 12 Pension Costs — Defined Benefit.

The recognition of a deferred pension funding asset of €547,000 in respect of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme reflects statutory provisions relating to the funding of that scheme.

The recognition of an asset of €9.9 million in respect of the Colleges of Education Pension Scheme anticipates that funding will be provided by the State to meet pension liabilities as they fall due. Inherent in this accounting treatment is an assumption that any income generated by the Centre will in the first instance be applied towards current expenses and that State funding will meet any shortfall in resources required to meet future pension liabilities.

#### *Basis of opinion*

I conducted my audit of the financial statements in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Educational Research Centre and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL for the year ended 31 December 2019

#### Appendix to the report

##### Responsibilities of Board members

The Board members are responsible for

- the preparation of financial statements in the form prescribed under Article 45 of the Educational Research Centre (Establishment) Order 2015
- ensuring that the financial statements give a true and fair view in accordance with FRS102
- ensuring the regularity of transactions
- assessing whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate, and
- such internal control as they determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

##### Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under Article 48 of the Educational Research Centre (Establishment) Order 2015 to audit the financial statements of the Educational Research Centre and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures.
- I conclude on the appropriateness of the use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, on whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast

significant doubt on the Educational Research Centre's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Educational Research Centre to cease to continue as a going concern.

- I evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

##### Information other than the financial statements

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information presented with those statements, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, I am required under the ISAs to read the other information presented and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

##### Reporting on other matters

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to bodies in receipt of substantial funding from the State in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I report if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them. I also report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records.

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

**REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL**  
for the year ended 31 December 2019

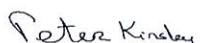
**Report of the C&AG (continued)**

**Report on information other than the financial statements, and on other matters**

The Educational Research Centre has presented certain other information together with the financial statements. This comprises the governance statement and Board members' report and the statement on internal control. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in regard to those matters.



**Peter Kinsley**  
For and on behalf of  
Comptroller and Auditor General

**15 December 2020**

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Income</b>			
Core Project Income	6a	426,234	775,224
Department of Education grant	5	1,794,710	2,101,341
DEIS funding		-	64,425
Non-core Project Income	6b	188,557	3,390
Test Department Sales		1,556,276	699,809
Publication sales		1,768	3,827
Other operating income		1,425	26,811
Net deferred funding for pensions	12.1	548,000	439,000
		<b>4,516,970</b>	<b>4,113,827</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	10	1,909,155	1,988,960
Other operating expenses	7	1,452,838	1,339,811
Retirement benefit costs	12	604,000	392,000
Depreciation	13	17,324	10,148
		<b>3,983,317</b>	<b>3,730,919</b>
<b>Total Comprehensive Income relating to the year</b>		<b>533,653</b>	<b>382,908</b>
Income and expenditure account brought forward		<b>968,771</b>	<b>585,863</b>
<b>Income and expenditure account carried forward</b>		<b>1,502,424</b>	<b>968,771</b>
		<b>=====</b>	<b>=====</b>

Educational Research Centre has no recognised gains or losses other than those reported in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and the Statement of Comprehensive Income. The results for the year have been calculated on the historical cost basis. Educational Research Centre's income and expenses all relate to continuing operations.

Approved by the board on 14 December 2020 and signed on its behalf by:

*Jude Cosgrove*

Jude Cosgrove (Dec 14, 2020 15:14 GMT)

Dr Jude Cosgrove  
CEO

*Pauric Travers*

Dr Pauric Travers  
Chairman

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME**  
for the year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
Total comprehensive income relating to the year		<b>533,653</b>	382,908
Actuarial (loss) on retirement benefit obligations	<b>12.1</b>	<b>(1,858,000)</b>	(2,063,000)
Adjustment to deferred retirement benefits funding	<b>12.1</b>	<b>1,858,000</b>	2,063,000
<b>Total comprehensive income in the year</b>		<b><u>533,653</u></b>	<b><u>382,908</u></b>

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

as at 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	13	<b>59,395</b>	<b>56,066</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Stocks	14	263,787	71,218
Receivables	15	390,089	249,773
Cash and cash equivalents	20	896,970	757,554
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		<b>1,550,846</b>	<b>1,078,545</b>
<b>Payables: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	16	<b>(107,817)</b>	<b>(165,840)</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<b>1,443,029</b>	<b>912,705</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>		<b>1,502,424</b>	<b>968,771</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Deferred funding asset for Pensions – Unfunded Scheme</b>	12.1	<b>10,447,000</b>	<b>8,041,000</b>
<b>Pension Liabilities – Unfunded Scheme</b>	12.1	<b>(10,447,000)</b>	<b>(8,041,000)</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>1,502,424</b>	<b>968,771</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Reserves</b>			
Income and expenditure account		<b>1,502,424</b>	<b>968,771</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		<b>1,502,424</b>	<b>968,771</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>

Approved by the board on 14 December 2020 and signed on its behalf by:

Jude Cosgrove  
Jude Cosgrove (Dec 14, 2020 15:14 GMT)

Dr Jude Cosgrove  
CEO

Pauric Travers

Dr Pauric Travers  
Chairman

**EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS**

for the year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>			
Total income for the year		533,653	382,908
Adjustments for:			
Depreciation		17,324	10,148
		<b>550,977</b>	<b>393,056</b>
Movements in working capital:			
Movement in stocks		(192,569)	2,410
Movement in receivables		(140,316)	57,276
Movement in payables		(58,023)	86,008
		<b>160,069</b>	<b>538,750</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>			
Payments to acquire property, plant and equipment		(20,653)	(35,651)
<b>Net increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>139,416</b>	<b>503,099</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year</b>		<b>757,554</b>	<b>254,455</b>
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>896,970</b>	<b>757,554</b>

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

for the year ended 31 December 2019

#### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Educational Research Centre is a Public Body and was established by statutory instrument, Educational Research Centre (Establishment) Order 2015 as amended by the Educational Research Centre (Establishment) (Amendment) Order 2017. At the year end the Centre has four members who are appointed by government.

#### 2. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The following accounting policies have been applied consistently in dealing with items which are considered material in relation to the Educational Research Centre financial statements.

##### **Statement of compliance**

The financial statements of the Educational Research Centre for the year ended 31 December 2019 have been prepared on the going concern basis and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in Ireland and Irish statute and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) issued by the Financial Reporting Council, as promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland.

##### **Income**

Income comprises of the invoice value of goods supplied by the Educational Research Centre, exclusive of any trade discounts. Income from project income is equivalent to the sum of the related expenditure incurred during the year.

##### **Basis of preparation**

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis and in accordance with the historical cost convention except instances of properties and financial instruments that are measured at revalued amounts or fair values, as explained in the accounting policies below if in existence. Historical cost is generally based on the fair value of the consideration given in exchange for assets. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is the FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" issued by the Financial Reporting Council and promulgated by Chartered Accountants Ireland.

##### **Property, plant and equipment and depreciation**

Property, plant and equipment are stated at cost or at valuation, less accumulated depreciation. The charge to depreciation is calculated to write off the original cost or valuation of property, plant and equipment, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	- 15% Straight line
Computer equipment	- 25% Straight line
Artwork	- 0% Straight line

The carrying values of tangible fixed assets are reviewed annually for impairment in periods if events or changes in circumstances indicate the carrying value may not be recoverable.

##### **Financial assets**

Investments held as fixed assets are stated at cost less provision for any permanent diminution in value. Income from other investments together with any related withholding tax is recognised in the income and expenditure account in the year in which it is receivable.

##### **Government grants**

Capital grants received and receivable are treated as deferred income and amortised to the Income and Expenditure Statement annually over the useful economic life of the asset to which it relates. Revenue grants are credited to the Income and Expenditure Statement when received.

##### **Stocks**

Stocks are valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value. Stocks are determined on a weighted average cost basis. Cost comprises expenditure incurred in the normal course of business in bringing stocks to their present location and condition. Full provision is made for obsolete and slow moving items. Net realisable value comprises actual or estimated selling price (net of trade discounts) less all further costs to completion or to be incurred in marketing and selling.

##### **Trade and other receivables**

Trade and other receivables are initially recognised at fair value and thereafter stated at amortised cost using the effective interest method less impairment losses for bad and doubtful debts except where the effect of discounting would be immaterial. In such cases the receivables are stated at cost less impairment losses for bad and doubtful debts.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### **Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents comprise cash at bank and in hand, demand deposits with banks and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less and bank overdrafts. In the Statement of Financial Position bank overdrafts are shown within payables.

#### **Trade and other payables**

Trade and other payables are initially recognised at fair value and thereafter stated at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method, unless the effect of discounting would be immaterial, in which case they are stated at cost.

#### **Taxation**

ERC is a Statutory Body. It does not trade for gain and therefore is exempt from Corporation Tax.

#### **Pensions**

The Centre has certain defined benefit retirement arrangements as detailed in note 12.

Defined benefit pension scheme liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method. The defined benefit pension charge to the Statement of Income and Expenditure comprises the current service cost and past service costs, and interest cost arising on the measurement of the pension liability at net present value. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognised as income to the extent that it is expected to be recoverable and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments. Actuarial gains and losses arising from changes in actuarial assumptions and from experience surpluses and deficits are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year in which they occur.

Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by employees, and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are remitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in the case of the Single Pension Scheme and retained by the Department of Education and Skills in the case of the College Pension Scheme.

Actuarial gains or losses arising on scheme liabilities are reflected in the Statement of Comprehensive Income, and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Education and Skills.

Amounts charged are calculated using the following rates:

Current service costs	-	Discount rate at the start of the year
Interest cost	-	Discount rate at the start of the year
Expected return on assets	-	Expected rate of return at the start of the year

#### **Receivable Asset**

##### *Colleges of Education Pension Scheme and Colleges of Education Spouses' and Children's Scheme*

The College recognises as an asset, an amount corresponding to the unfunded deferred liability for pensions on the basis of a number of past events. These events include the statutory backing for the superannuation scheme, and the policy and practice in relation to funding public service pensions including the annual estimates process. While there is no formal agreement and therefore no guarantee regarding these specific amounts with the Department of Education and Skills, the Centre has no evidence that this funding policy will not continue to progressively meet this amount in accordance with current practice.

#### *Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("SPSPS")*

The Single Scheme is the defined benefit pension scheme for pensionable public servants appointed on or after 1 January 2013 in accordance with the Public Service Pension (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. ERC is a relevant Authority under the scheme.

#### **Significant accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty**

In the preparation of the financial statements, management has made judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported for assets and liabilities as at the balance sheet date and the amounts reported for revenues and expenses during the year. Actual results may differ from these estimates. Estimates and judgments are reviewed on an ongoing basis. The estimates, assumptions and judgements that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amount of assets and liabilities within the financial statements within the next financial year are addressed below:

#### **Holidays earned but not taken and other employee benefits provision**

This is calculated in respect of holidays earned but not taken at the balance sheet date of 31 December 2019 that is attributed across the whole population of employees.

#### **Property, Plant and Equipment**

Depreciation charge is calculated based on estimates and assumptions on asset useful economic lives and expected residual value.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### 3. GOING CONCERN

The members are aware that the entity is effectively funded by way of income from the Department of Education and Skills. The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis, the validity of which depends upon the continued availability of these funds.

In this regard the entity has considered that confirmation of funding for 2021. However the entity has not received confirmation of continued financial support from the Department and is unlikely to do so due to the nature of the budgeting process. The Department of Education and Skills undertake this annual process close to the year end and therefore the budget for 2021 and beyond has not yet been agreed upon. Historically the entity has had no issue in securing continued financing.

Having considered the foregoing the directors believe it is appropriate to prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis. The financial statements do not include any adjustments that would result from a failure to achieve the projected financial surplus or if the bank or Department of Education and Skills could no longer provide financial support.

#### 4. INCOME

The whole of the Educational Research Centre's income is attributable to its market in the Republic of Ireland and is derived from the principal activity of the evaluation of educational provision, analysis of issues in education, analysis of public exam results and national assessments of educational achievement.

#### 5. GRANTS RECEIVED

A grant of €2,219,025 (2018: €2,876,556) was received from the Department of Education and Skills. This includes a grant of €839,417 (2018: €1,951,556) for pay related costs and €1,379,608 (2018: €925,000) to cover non pay related costs. Of the total grants received €424,315 (2018: €775,215) is included in project income and €1,794,710 (2018: €2,101,341) is included in the Department of Education grant.

6a. CORE PROJECT INCOME	2019	2018
	€	€
Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)	1,919	3,399
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)	44,924	293,127
Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)	203,593	157,182
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)	91,309	94,944
Test Standardisation	13,145	100,543
National assessments	53,496	11
CBT	17,848	126,018
	<b>426,234</b>	<b>775,224</b>

Core project are recurring projects such as international assessments (e.g, PIRLS/TIMSS/PISA) and national assessments (e.g.NAMER which form the basis of the ERC funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Core project funding is included in the overall DES pay and non-pay funding which cover core project costs as well as general ERC expenditure (e.g.; health and safety, IT etc).

The income for the DEIS project is not part of Curriculum and Assessment Unit funding (note 5) but is invoiced to the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Skills.

6b. NON-CORE PROJECT INCOME	2019	2018
	€	€
DLF	55,076	3,390
CPD Wellbeing	52,855	-
Gaelteach Recognition Scheme	20,037	-
NEPS	60,589	-
	<b>188,557</b>	<b>3,390</b>

Non-core projects are projects which are not included in the overall yearly DES funding and relate to ad-hoc projects (such as the Digital Learning Framework or NEPS). These projects attract specific funding from sections of the Department other than Central Policy Unit (CPU) or other agencies and each fundings relate only to the relevant projects.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### 7. OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES

The other operating expenses for the year are as follows:-	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
Core project expenditure (see note below)	8a	426,234	775,451
Non-core project expenditure (see note below)	8b	27,574	-
Printing, postage and stationery		712,228	250,016
Opening stock		71,218	73,628
Closing stock		(263,787)	(71,218)
Staff recruitment and training		22,602	28,353
Rent payable		12,000	7,600
Rates		2,866	202
Insurance		14,241	13,330
Light and heat		20,560	20,892
Cleaning		15,392	1,825
Repairs and maintenance		6,927	5,841
Telephone		9,925	7,264
Computer costs		49,303	45,452
Conference costs		2,129	3,424
Travelling and subsistence		8,277	8,732
Maintenance contracts		54,020	31,444
Legal and professional		112,861	36,090
Consultancy fees		89,753	57,012
Audit and accountancy		38,295	30,238
Meeting room hire and catering		869	371
Bank charges		3,917	2,367
Profit/loss on exchange		-	111
General expenses		4,516	3,589
Waste management and refuse		1,826	3,797
Penalties and fines		235	4,000
Membership		8,857	-
		<b>1,452,838</b>	<b>1,339,811</b>

**Note:** Project expenditure of €426,234 (2018: €775,451) does not include depreciation on project assets of €Nil (2018: €3,163) as this is shown separately under depreciation. See note 13 for further detail. Non-core project expenditure of €27,574 (2018: €Nil) does not include wages and salaries on non-core project work of €161,084 (2018: €Nil) as this is shown separately under wages and salaries. See note 10 for further detail.

#### 8a. CORE PROJECT EXPENDITURE

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
Project hardware/software		23,126	194,257
Travel		56,990	81,220
Printing, postage and stationery		105,397	93,378
Survey, administration and technical support		44,451	171,207
Membership		194,931	220,389
Consultancy		-	15,000
Sundry		1,339	-
		<b>426,234</b>	<b>775,451</b>
Depreciation – Project assets	13	-	3,163
		<b>426,234</b>	<b>778,614</b>

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

8b. NON-CORE PROJECT EXPENDITURE	Notes	2019	2018
		€	€
Travel		6,191	-
Printing, postage and stationery		17,242	-
Survey, administration and technical support		1,273	-
Sundry		2,868	-
		27,574	-
Wages and salaries – non-core project work	10	161,084	-
		188,658	-
		=====	=====

### 9. OPERATING DEFICIT

	2019	2018
	€	€
<b>Operating deficit is stated after charging:</b>		
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	17,324	10,148
Deficit on foreign currencies	-	111
Auditors remuneration – comprised as follows:-		
- Comptroller & Auditor General	13,500	15,000
- Mazars	-	409
	=====	=====

### 10. EMPLOYEES AND REMUNERATION

#### Number of employees

The average number of persons employed (including executive Board Members) during the year was as follows:

	2019	2018
	Number	Number
Staff	46	48
	=====	=====

The staff costs comprise:

	2019	2018
	€	€
Wages and salaries	1,909,155	1,988,960
	=====	=====

Included in wages and salaries charge for the year is €161,084 (2018: €Nil) for wages and salaries on non-core project work.

All pensions are paid by DCU. The pension contributions for the Colleges of Education Pension Scheme are deducted from salaries. The pension deductions are removed from the salary funding received from the Department of Education and Skills. ERC receive funding from the Department of Education and Skills equal to the employee contributions of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme members.

Educational Research Centre has accrued €23,870 (2018: €26,662) in relation to holiday pay for 2019.

Details of the number of employees whose total employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) for the reporting year fell within each pay band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards are;

Payband	Total number of employees whose benefits for the year fell within the pay band
60,000-70,000	3
70,001-80,000	2
110,001-120,000	1

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### 11. BOARD MEMBERS' EMOLUMENTS

No Board members received Board fees during the year. Prof Michael Martin received vouched expenses of €Nil (2018: €850) for travel and accommodation. Mr Edward Murtagh received payment of €410 (2018: €3,348) and vouched expenses of €593 (2018: €2,994) for his work on a project of the ERC. This payment is entirely separate from his work as an ERC Governing Board member.

Total CEO remuneration<sup>2</sup> amounted to €119,524 (2018: €134,318). The CEO received payment of €5,184 (2018: €3,321) for vouched expenses relating to national and international travel. The CEO received payment of €- (2018: €19,379) and vouched expense of €- (2018: €783) for her work on a project of the ERC. This payment is entirely separate from her work as the CEO.

During 2019, six Board meetings were held.

#### 12. PENSION COSTS - DEFINED BENEFIT

ERC has two defined benefit schemes; Colleges of Education Pension Scheme and Colleges of Education Spouses' and Children's Scheme and the Single Public Service Pension Scheme ("SPSPS"). DCU (and prior to its integration as part of DCU, St Patrick's College) makes payments on behalf of ERC to the Centre's beneficiaries relating to the two defined benefit superannuation schemes on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

The first scheme the Colleges of Education Pension Scheme and Colleges of Education Spouses' and Children's Scheme is a defined benefit pension scheme which is funded annually on a pay as you go basis from monies available to it, including monies provided by the Department of Education and Skills through the Higher Education Authority and from contributions deducted from staff salaries. These contributions deducted are also removed from grants allocated by the Department of Education and Skills. The benefits at retirement include an annual pension and lump sum equivalent to the sum of the referable amounts in respect of each calendar year or part thereof and are based on final salary. The spouse benefits include a lump sum of twice the Pensionable Remuneration and 50% of the member's pension for death in service or 50% of the member's pension for death in deferment and death after retirement.

The second scheme the Single Public Service Pension ("Single Scheme") is the defined benefit pension scheme for pensionable public servants appointed on or after 1 January 2013 in accordance with the Public Service Pension (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012. The scheme provides for a pension and retirement lump sum based on career-average pensionable remuneration, and spouse's and children's pensions. The minimum pension age is 66 years (rising in line with State pension age changes). It includes an actuarially-reduced early retirement facility from age 55. Pensions in payment increase in line with the consumer price index.

Pension costs reflect pension benefits earned by employees in the year and are shown net of staff pension contributions which are remitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for members of the Single Scheme and retained by the Department of Education and Skills in the case of the College Pension Scheme. An amount corresponding to the pension charge is recognised as income to the extent that it is recoverable and offset by grants received in the year to discharge pension payments.

Actuarial gains or losses arising from changes in actuarial assumption and from experience surpluses and deficits are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year in which they occur and a corresponding adjustment is recognised in the amount recoverable from the Department of Education and Skills.

Pension liabilities represent the present value of future pension payments earned by staff to date. Deferred pension funding represents the corresponding asset to be recovered in future periods from the Department of Education and Skills.

The latest full actuarial valuation of the Scheme for accounting purposes was carried out with effect from 31 December 2019 by an independent qualified actuary. The major assumptions used by the actuary are as follows:

	2019	2018
Rate of increase in salaries	2.5%	2.6%
Pension increases in payment	2.5%	2.6%
Discount rate	1.0%	1.9%
Inflation assumptions	1.5%	1.6%
Pension increases in deferment	2.5%	2.6%

<sup>2</sup>The CEO is a member of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme and no other additional entitlements.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### 12. PENSION COSTS - DEFINED BENEFIT CONTINUED

Investigations have been carried out within the past three years into the mortality experience of the Centre's major schemes. These investigations concluded that the current mortality conclusions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement at age 65 are:

Retiring today	2019	2018
Males aged 65 at balance sheet date	21.7	21.5
Females aged 65 at balance sheet date	24.1	23.9
Retiring in 20 years		
Males aged 65 in 20 years' time	24.0	23.9
Females aged 65 in 20 years' time	26.1	26.0

#### 12.1. PENSION COSTS - DEFINED BENEFIT CONTINUED

##### Analysis of the amount charged to Income Statement

	2019 €	2018 €
Current service cost	511,000	344,000
Net interest expense	161,000	111,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total operating charge	672,000	455,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Contributions from employees	(68,000)	(63,000)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Charge to Income Statement	604,000	392,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>

##### Analysis of movement in scheme during the year

At start of year	(8,041,000)	(5,539,000)
Movement in year :		
Current service costs (net of employee contributions)	(443,000)	(281,000)
Benefits paid	124,000	16,000
Contributions from employees	(68,000)	(63,000)
Actuarial (losses)	(1,858,000)	(2,063,000)
Net interest / (credit)	(161,000)	(111,000)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>At end of year – Present value of scheme liabilities</b>	<b>(10,447,000)</b>	<b>(8,041,000)</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Pension asset in the balance sheet	10,447,000	8,041,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The deferred funding asset for retirement benefits at 31 December 2019 amounts to €10,447m (2018: €8,041m). €9.9m (2018: €7.747m) of the asset relates to the Colleges of Education Scheme and €0.547m (2018: €0.294m) relates to the Single Pension Scheme.

##### Deferred funding for retirement benefits

The net deferred funding for retirement benefits recognised in the Statement of Income and Expenditure and Retained Revenue Reserves was as follows:

	2019 €'000	2018 €'000
Funding recoverable in respect of current year retirement benefit costs	672	455
Benefits paid	(124)	(16)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	548	439
	<hr/>	<hr/>

##### Nature and extent of the risks arising from financial instruments held by the defined benefit scheme

The Scheme is unfunded and has no investments.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

#### 12.1. PENSION COSTS - DEFINED BENEFIT CONTINUED

##### History of Deferred Benefit Obligations

	2019 €'000	2018 €'000	2017 €'000
Deferred benefit obligations	10,447	8,041	5,539
Experience gains/(losses) on scheme liabilities amount	(1,858)	(2,063)	(134)
Percentage of scheme liabilities	17.79%	25.65%	2.42%

The valuation used for FRS102 disclosures has been based on an actuarial valuation at 31 December 2019 by a qualified actuary taking account of the requirements of FRS102 in order to assess the scheme liabilities at 31 December 2019.

Single scheme members are included in the pension liability at 31 December 2019, the actuarial calculation took into account the differing entitlements that apply to the scheme.

#### 13. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

	Fixtures, fittings and equipment	Computer equipment	Artwork	Total
<b>Cost</b>	€	€	€	€
At 1 January 2019	37,757	37,233	5,000	79,990
Additions	9,162	11,491	-	20,653
At 31 December 2019	<u>46,919</u>	<u>48,724</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>100,643</u>
<b>Depreciation</b>				
At 1 January 2019	8,825	15,099	-	23,924
Charge for the year	6,693	10,631	-	17,324
At 31 December 2019	<u>15,518</u>	<u>25,730</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>41,248</u>
<b>Net book value</b>				
<b>At 31 December 2019</b>	<b><u>31,401</u></b>	<b><u>22,994</u></b>	<b><u>5,000</u></b>	<b><u>59,395</u></b>
At 31 December 2018	<u>28,932</u>	<u>22,134</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>56,066</u>

The building occupied by the Educational Research Centre is owned by DCU. ERC have permitted use of the building at no cost. A transition agreement between both parties expired in September 2018 and it is planned to put these arrangements on a formal footing.

The Test Department building in Richmond Road is currently held in trust by the St. Laurence O'Toole Trust. ERC have had discussions with the Department of Education & Skills, DCU and the St Lawrence O'Toole trust to formally transfer the building to ERC. It is expected that the ownership will be transferred to the entity as the building can only be used for the purpose of the Educational Research Centre.

Included in the depreciation charge for the year is €Nil (2018: €3,163) for depreciation on project assets.

Artwork relates to paintings which were left to the Centre as part of an inheritance. They are currently not depreciated as their residual value is considered to be the same as the current cost they are held at.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

		2019	2018
		€	€
14. STOCKS	Finished goods and goods for resale	<u>263,787</u>	<u>71,218</u>
The replacement cost of stock did not differ significantly from the figures shown.			
15. RECEIVABLES	Trade receivables	171,858	17,363
	Other receivables	3,000	3,121
	Prepayments and accrued income	215,231	229,289
		<u>390,089</u>	<u>249,773</u>
16. PAYABLES	Trade payables	6,644	745
Amounts falling due within one year	PAYE/PRSI	-	862
	PSWT	13,321	-
	Accruals	87,852	164,233
		<u>107,817</u>	<u>165,840</u>

#### 17. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

The entity had no material capital commitments at the year-ended 31 December 2019.

#### 18. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Key management personnel in Educational Research Centre consists of the CEO. Total CEO remuneration amounted to €119,524 (2018: €134,318).

#### 19. EVENTS AFTER END OF REPORTING PERIOD

The ERC has considered the impact of Covid 19 on the operations of the Centre at a meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. An assessment of the projected financial impact of Covid 19 on the Centre to the end of December 2021 was reviewed by the Board and the Educational Research Centre's reporting section in the Department of Educational and Skills Central Policy Unit.

The assessment included the measure of new costs, projected loss of income and projected savings as well as project funding sources for the period. In our opinion, despite the significant loss of income resulting from the cancellation of standardised testing, the Educational Research Centre does not expect the pandemic to have a material impact on its ability to operate as a going concern.

The Board continues to monitor the financial situation.

## EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE

### NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019

continued

20.	CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	2019	2018
		€	€
	Cash and bank balances	<b>896,970</b>	<b>757,554</b>
		<hr/>	<hr/>

### 21. APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements were approved by the board on 14 December 2020 and signed on its behalf by:

*Jude Cosgrove*  
Jude Cosgrove (Dec 14, 2020 15:14 GMT)

**Dr Jude Cosgrove**  
CEO

*Pauric Travers*

**Dr Pauric Travers**  
Chairman

## Appendix 3: Report on Protected Disclosure

The ERC adopted its own policy on protected disclosures on 25 January 2018 in accordance with section 21 (1) of the Protected Disclosure Act 2014 and the requirement of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016).

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosure Act, 2014 requires that an annual report be published in relation to protected disclosures received by the ERC.

No such disclosures were received in 2019 and both a copy of the ERC policy and the 2019 annual report on protected disclosure are available on the ERC website <http://www.erc.ie>.