



**NCGE MANAGEMENT OF GUIDANCE COMMITTEE  
2017- 2021**

**REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE  
(25 NOVEMBER 2020)**

**Preamble**

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) was established by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) under the aegis of Léargas, The Exchange Bureau (Léargas), a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, in 1995, following the earlier establishment in Léargas of the Transnational Vocational Information and Guidance centre, under the EU's Petra Programme.

NCGE is an integral part of the legal entity that is Léargas but has developed and operated under its own identity.

In 2010<sup>1</sup> a new Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) for NCGE was established as a sub-committee of the Board of Léargas. The aims and objectives of NCGE were revised and the separate roles and responsibilities of the Board of Léargas and the MGC were further defined.

The MGC was appointed with nominations for each term of three years 2010-2013, 2013-2016 and 2017-2019. The Chair was nominated by the Minister for each Committee. In 2019, the Department of Education and Skills agreed to the extension of the MGC 2017-2019 into 2020 and subsequently to end 2021, in light of expected outcomes of the Department Indecon Report of the review of careers guidance.

In light of the establishment of Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, it is expected that these Terms of Reference will require further updates in 2021.

**Guidance Definition**

The Education Act, 1998, Section (c) and two key national definitions inform the developments of guidance policy and provision in Ireland and consequently the work of NCGE:

The Education Act 1998, Section 9(c) states that a recognised school shall....'use its available resources to (c) ensure that students have access to appropriate guidance to assist them in their educational and career choices'.

The National Guidance Forum Report (2007) states that 'Guidance facilitates people throughout their lives to manage their own educational, training, occupational, personal, social and life choices so that they reach their full potential and contribute to the development of a better society'.

The Department of Education and Skills Guidelines (2005) state that 'Guidance in schools refers to a range of learning experiences provided in a developmental sequence that assist students to develop self-management skills which will

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<sup>1</sup>An NCGE Management Committee was appointed by the Minister for Education for an initial three-year period of 1999 – 2002.

lead to effective choices and decisions about their lives. It encompasses the three separate but interlinked areas of personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance’.

## AIMS OF THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GUIDANCE IN EDUCATION

The aims of the NCGE, as outlined by DES, are to:-

1. advise on policy and strategies for the promotion of a continuum of guidance in the context of lifelong learning;
2. promote the implementation of best practice in guidance in schools, centres for education, and Further Education and Training settings;
3. promote the implementation of best practice in guidance in non-formal settings in accordance with national priorities;
4. provide advice, support, materials and resources for guidance in education and FET;
5. advise on high quality and relevant initial guidance counselling education and training and to provide continuing professional development (CPD) for guidance practitioners;
6. organise the provision of education guidance service to Irish nationals in the European Schools;
7. contribute to the exchange of information on guidance provision and practice with other guidance and employment services, through the National Resource Centre, (Euroguidance Centre) both in Ireland and in other Member States of the EU.

In fulfilling its aims NCGE, as a constituent part of Léargas, is committed to working in collaboration and partnership with relevant stakeholders including DES, SOLAS, Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling (DSGC), the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC), the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), the Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland (AEGAI), Higher Education Authority (HEA), National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), Department of Social Protection (DSP) and other Government Departments and National and Employer agencies where appropriate.

The activities of NCGE are agreed by DES, the MGC and Board of Léargas and are set out in each three-year Strategic Plan (See Appendix 1).

## LÉARGAS AND NCGE FRAMEWORK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

### The Role of Léargas

The following matters, subject to approval by DES, remain a function of Léargas: -

- Overall reporting, accounting and governance as a corporate entity
- Appointment, remuneration and conditions of service of staff
- Accountability and audit framework for the overall entity
- Major investments and capital projects
- Agreement of leases and securing of premises
- Significant acquisition, disposal and retirement of assets

### Finance

All financial authority rests with Léargas, under whose aegis NCGE operates, and therefore determines the overall budgetary, governance and human resource framework for NCGE.

Annual budgets for NCGE will be prepared with Léargas’ support for the approval of the MGC and the Board of Léargas.

Any proposed significant projects costing €10,000 or more will be flagged by NCGE at the time the budget is being approved.

Léargas will conduct a review of expenditure versus budget with the NCGE Director each quarter. After the first review, each year any potential variances will be identified for approval by the MGC Finance Sub-Committee and the Léargas Finance and Audit Committee.

Management accounts will be prepared by Léargas on a regular basis for the approval of the Léargas Board.

Public Procurement guidelines in respect of all procurement will be observed. All requests for tenders will be forwarded to the Board of Léargas in advance for approval. Léargas will participate in short-listing tenders before a proposed winning tender is submitted to the Board for approval via the MGC.

### **Staffing**

Léargas has overall responsibility for the appointment, remuneration and conditions of service of staff, including issuing of contracts, which will require prior approval of the Department of Education and Skills and the Léargas Finance and Audit Committee.

Léargas and NCGE will be involved jointly in the recruitment and selection of staff for NCGE.

Contracts for external service providers and/or staff will be approved by Léargas.

### **Administration and Reporting**

The Administration and reporting arrangements between Léargas and NCGE are as follows: -

- Reports from NCGE to the DES will be copied simultaneously to Léargas
- Relevant briefing material for the Department of Education and Skills in response to Parliamentary Questions will be prepared by the NCGE and forwarded to Léargas which will then forward the responses to the DES.
- The NCGE Director will be invited to present to and update the Board of Léargas on at least two occasions per annum or as required
- The agreed Minutes of the MGC will be circulated to the Board of Léargas for information purposes
- The NCGE Annual Output Statement Report will be forwarded to the Board of Léargas for adoption and inclusion in the Board's own Annual Report

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE NCGE MANAGEMENT OF GUIDANCE COMMITTEE (MGC)**

### **Role of the MGC**

The Management of Guidance Committee (MGC) is a sub-committee of Léargas with responsibility for the management of guidance policy, supports and delivery issues within this framework.

The role of the MGC is to provide a mechanism for support, oversight, governance and reporting on NCGE's programme and activities. In fulfilling its role, the MGC will: -

1. oversee and give strategic direction to the work of NCGE in accordance with the aims of NCGE;
2. ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of NCGE in providing quality advice, professional development, guidance materials and resources to guidance practitioners in schools, centres for education and FET;
3. manage and give strategic direction to the work of NCGE as a national focal point for the mutual exchange of information on guidance practice with other guidance and employment services, in Ireland, the EU and other participating countries;
4. ensure the operation of NCGE in compliance with statutory, administrative and public procurement requirements and, as appropriate, with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies<sup>2</sup> within the

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<sup>2</sup> DPER Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies 2016

<http://www.per.gov.ie/en/revised-code-of-practice-for-the-governance-of-state-bodies/>

confines of its remit (i.e. in so far as guidance policy, supports and delivery issues are concerned). The MGC will ensure an appropriate reporting framework to Léargas insofar as the activities of NCGE and budgetary, human resources issues are concerned;

5. review and revise NCGE three-year Strategic Plans, which will be forwarded for consideration to the Board of Léargas prior to submission to DES;
6. report to DES, within the conditions set out in the Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA), on the operation of the Centre and provide on an annual basis a written report (i.e. the Annual Output Statement report) on NCGE's activities including its efficiency and effectiveness in supporting good practice in guidance provision.

**The MGC will have specific responsibility for: -**

- prioritisation and approval of NCGE's programme of activities and budget plans
- approval of terms of major contracts on behalf of NCGE, within the framework of accountability agreed with Léargas
- preparation of accounts and reports for both Léargas and DES
- preparation of accounts and reports for SOLAS as required, on receipt of the annual grant allocation

**MGC Finance Sub-Committee**

In addition, quarterly cash-based accounts will be prepared by Léargas for review by the MGC Finance Sub-Committee which meets quarterly in advance of sign-off by Léargas and submission to DES. This Sub-Committee comprises of the Director of the NCGE, the Chair of the MGC, the Léargas Executive Director and the MGC representatives from Department – CAP and SOLAS. This Sub-Committee reports to the MGC.

**DES, Léargas, and NCGE Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA)<sup>3</sup>**

DES, Léargas and NCGE discuss, agree and sign the PDA which outlines the requirements of NCGE provision in line with DES requirements. The PDA provides an agreed framework for identifying the respective roles and responsibilities of DES and NCGE in relation to developing and supporting quality guidance provision in the education sector (i.e. post-primary schools and FET - formal and non-formal) as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice. The PDA refers to the programme of activities as agreed within the NCGE Strategic Plan.

**Role of the Director of NCGE**

The role of the Director of NCGE is to: -

- achieve the aims of NCGE as established in its Terms of Reference
- develop and implement the agreed Strategic Plan
- lead, manage and support a team of dedicated professional and administrative staff
- ensure the effective financial and administrative management of NCGE
- communicate and promote the work of NCGE

The Director is an ex-officio member of the MGC.

The Director may be required, from time-to-time, to travel both nationally and internationally.

The Director will report to the MGC and to Léargas.

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<sup>3</sup> Performance Deliver Agreement as per DPER Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016

## **Membership of the MGC**

- DES invites nominations from the agreed stakeholder groups, one male and one female nomination from each, for one position from each. Members are nominated by specific bodies based on their experience and expertise in their particular area
- A copy of the Terms of Reference (TOR) will be provided to all stakeholders
- DES proposes the final list of nominees to the Minister
- Members of the MGC are nominated by the Minister of Education and Skills and appointed by the Board of Léargas
- The Minister also nominates the Chair and the nominee is appointed by the Board of Léargas
- Members are nominated for the term of this Committee from specific bodies
- The MGC can propose to DES to seek nomination from further bodies, if deemed appropriate, in order to extend membership to remain relevant to the guidance in education and FET sector
- In the event that an appointed Member of the MGC resigns or has changed job/position from which they were nominated, they must inform the MGC Chair. NCGE will confer with the nominating organisation to confirm that they wish to continue with representation from that individual or that the organisation wishes to nominate an alternative nominee. The organisation will inform the Minister that due to change in personnel they will request a new nomination

## **Organisations currently represented on the MGC (2016)**

- Léargas – 2 members (Executive Director and one member of the Board)
- DES – 2 members (Curriculum, Assessment and Policy (CAP) and Inspectorate sections)
- SOLAS (The Further Education and Training Authority) – 1 member
- HEA – 1 member
- DSGC – 1 member
- DSP - 1 member
- ETBI - 1 member
- NAPD – 1 member
- IGC - 1 member
- AEGAI - 1 member
- NCGE – the NCGE Director is an ex-officio member

## **Role and Responsibilities of MGC Members**

The following roles and responsibilities are underpinned by the guidelines provided in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies . Each appointed member of the MGC will be issued with a copy of the Code of Practice and will be required to attend Corporate Governance training as pertains to the role of the MGC, which will be provided by NCGE.

1. Each member of MGC is appointed for the term of office of the MGC which is usually a three-year term.
2. Each member is required to declare, on appointment to the Committee, if there are any conflict of interest issues with their appointment as per the code of practice legislation.
3. Each member is expected to respect the confidential nature of the MGC Meetings. Documents remain confidential to the Committee until agreed by the Chair for distribution or consultation.
4. Where possible, decisions of the MGC will be reached by consensus. Where this is not possible, the majority vote will apply and the casting vote is to the Chair. Each member will be required to accept the right of the Committee to make decisions. It is the role of the Committee Member not to undermine the decision of the Committee or the reputation of NCGE with stakeholders.
5. Each member is required to attend all scheduled MGC meetings, usually five or six per year. Where attendance is not possible, notification should be sent to the Chair as soon as possible. In the event that a member has not attended for three consecutive meetings, NCGE will contact the nominating organisation to confirm the explanation for absence and/or to request an alternative nomination.
6. There is no remuneration for appointment to the MGC. Nevertheless, each member is entitled to claim appropriate travel and subsistence expenses from NCGE for attendance at meetings, in line with NCGE travel claim procedures.