Dr. Paula Flynn is primary investigator on a collaborative research study with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD). The initial ‘learner voice’ project with NAPD began in September 2013 and set out to determine if the impact of engagement with a ‘voice’ methodology was an empowering and positive experience for student participants and also, to discover if this consultation of students would encourage leadership responses on the part of students in finding solutions or improving educational experience for themselves and consequently, all learners. The rationale for the study is underpinned with the findings of Paula’s doctoral research which highlighted the potential for transformation and empowerment amongst young people in schools who encountered an experience of ‘authentic listening’ when consulted on their educational experience. In particular, her evidence from working with ‘difficult difference’ suggests that a ‘student voice’ approach to supporting young people is fundamental to the development of an inclusive learning environment for the benefit of all students.

NCCA joined this research partnership in October 2013 to pursue a specific study within the learner voice project which involves eliciting the perspectives of students in a number of post-primary schools on the development of Junior Cycle Specifications. The purpose of this project is to consult students as experts on their own experience of learning and to incorporate their
insights in this opportunity for curricular co-construction. The overarching focus to this two year study is to determine how to include student voice in education planning such that there is an embedded culture of ‘shared language’, ‘co-construction’ and a strategy that will provide a sustainable structure and response to student voice both for schools and the NCCA.