

Assessment for *Curriculum for Excellence*

Strategic Vision ***Key Principles***



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Cabinet Secretary's Foreword

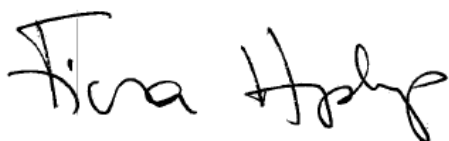
Curriculum for Excellence aims to ensure that children and young people develop the knowledge and skills for learning, life and work that they need to be successful in the 21st Century.

Assessment is one of three key strands of work in implementing *Curriculum for Excellence*. The other areas are curriculum guidance which was published in the Spring and the next generation of National Qualifications details of which were announced in June 2009.

This document sets out the Scottish Government's strategic vision for assessment within *Curriculum for Excellence*. The main differences from the existing assessment arrangements are that:

- Assessment practices will follow and support the new curriculum. This will promote higher quality learning and teaching and give more autonomy and professional responsibility to teachers.
- Standards and expectations will be defined in a way that reflects the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This will support greater breadth and depth of learning and place a greater focus on skills development (including higher order skills).
- A national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3-18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving greater consistency and confidence in their professional judgements.
- A National Assessment Resource will help teachers to achieve greater consistency and understanding in their professional judgements. There will also be a major focus on CPD to help teachers develop the skills required.

Overall, the strategic vision aims to create a better, fairer and more robust system that promotes quality of achievement throughout education.



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Assessment for *Curriculum for Excellence*

Strategic Vision and Key Principles

This document is to inform teachers¹, pre-school, school and college managers, education authorities and others with an interest in and responsibility for *Curriculum for Excellence* about the vision for assessment.

It sets out the Scottish Government's strategy on how to build on our existing strong foundations of effective approaches to assessment. In doing so, we will aim to maximise the impact of *Curriculum for Excellence* in raising standards of achievement for all learners. Scotland has many strengths in this area that have been developed through, for example, the *Assessment is for Learning* programme and *National Qualifications*. We are also building on our traditional strengths in learning and teaching. The findings of the *Assessment Reform Group* in the *Analysis and Review of Innovations in Assessment (ARIA)* and other international findings will also inform these developments.

Curriculum for Excellence sets out the values, purposes and principles which underpin the new curriculum from 3 to 18. A revised assessment system will be driven by the curriculum and so will necessarily reflect these values and principles. The strategic vision and key principles outlined in this paper will be expanded through further advice in a **Framework for Assessment**.

The Framework for Assessment from 3 to 18 aims to create:

- a more effective assessment system which supports greater breadth and depth of learning and a greater focus on skills development
- through collaborative working, a better-connected assessment system with better links between pre-school, primary and secondary schools, colleges and other settings to promote smooth transitions in learning
- better understanding of effective assessment practice and sharing of standards and expectations as well as more consistent assessment
- more autonomy and professional responsibility for teachers.

Purposes of assessment

Information from assessment serves several important purposes: to support learning; to give assurance to parents and others about learners' progress; to provide a summary of what learners have achieved, including through qualifications and awards, and to inform future improvements.

Principles of assessment

The principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* apply to assessment in a way that achieves coherence across experiences and outcomes, learning and teaching and assessment practice. Above all, assessment needs to meet learners' needs and enable all learners to achieve aspirational goals and maximise their potential. Assessment practice should follow and reinforce the curriculum and promote high quality learning and teaching approaches. Assessment needs to support learning by engaging learners and providing high quality feedback. Assessment has to be fair and inclusive and allow every learner to show what

¹ The term 'teacher' or 'staff' in this document is used to refer to all staff involved in assessment and includes pre-school practitioners, college lecturers, youth workers and other relevant practitioners.

they have achieved and how well they are progressing. It is important that the information coming from assessment is able to show the breadth and depth of learning. Assessment also has to involve high quality interactions and motivate learners. Assessment approaches should be proportionate and fit for purpose: different forms of assessment are appropriate at different stages and in different areas of learning. We expect to see, and currently find, that pre-school practice is very focused on personal development and feedback with experiences built around the rapidly developing child while in addition at the senior phase we have more formal and structured assessment practices. Assessment which is used as the basis for awarding qualifications needs particular safeguards to ensure fairness to all candidates and give confidence to colleges, universities and employers.

Standards and expectations

A standard is something against which we measure performance. *Curriculum for Excellence* has the clear aim of building on current practice to raise achievement. Standards and expectations in this context are set out for the whole curriculum in the ‘experiences and outcomes’ of *Curriculum for Excellence* and their equivalent within specifications for qualifications. Within a level for a curriculum area, or a part of an area such as reading, the experiences and outcomes describe the sorts of knowledge, understanding, attributes and skills expected.

The expectations about progression through curriculum levels are shown in the table below.

Curriculum Level	Stage
Early	The pre-school years and P1
First	To the end of P4
Second	To the end of P7
Third, Fourth	S1 to S3 (Fourth level broadly aligns to SCQF level 4)
Senior phase	S4 to S6, and college or other means of study

The expectations comprise an entitlement and apply to the learning of every child and young person. Children and young people will progress at different rates: some will require additional support and may take longer for their learning to be secure at a particular level for some or all areas of the curriculum; others will achieve secure learning sooner. A broad general education includes all² of the [experiences and outcomes](#) across all [curriculum areas](#) up to and including the [third level](#).

Assessment approaches should help learners to show their progress through the levels and enable learners to demonstrate their achievements in a range of ways which are appropriate to learning. For learners to demonstrate that their progress is secure and that they have achieved a level, they will need opportunities to show that they:

² The exceptions to this statement are where specific sets of experiences and outcomes are specialised: Gaidhlig, Gaelic (learners) and classical languages and religious education in Roman Catholic schools.

- have achieved a breadth of learning across the experiences and outcomes for an aspect of the curriculum;
- can respond to the level of challenge set out in the experiences and outcomes, and are moving forward to more challenging learning in some aspects; and
- can apply what they have learned in new and unfamiliar situations.

Teachers can use these three aspects to decide when a learner has met agreed expectations and achieved a level, either in a part of a curriculum area such as reading, or in a whole curriculum area.

Assessing progress

Teachers assess progress constantly as part of daily learning and teaching. They do this, for example, by watching and listening to learners carrying out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, by considering how they answer questions. They get to know their learners well, build up a profile of their progress, strengths and needs and involve them in planning what they need to learn next.

Teachers will use evidence of learning to identify areas where progress has been particularly strong or less secure. The evidence will be different depending upon the learning activity and learners' preferences about how to show what they have learned. Teachers need a range of assessment approaches to assess the different types of achievement across the curriculum. They will have access to support and materials to help them with this task including through the National Assessment Resource.

From time to time teachers also take stock of their learners' progress in order to be able to plan ahead and to report on progress. This is vital in ensuring that learners' progress is on track and that action is being taken to address any problems at the earliest possible point. This stocktaking is particularly important at transitions (from pre-school to primary 1 and from primary to secondary school, for example) when we know that some can fall through the net.

Under the 5-14 Programme, learners moved to the next level as soon as they had achieved a set of learning outcomes. Reflecting the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, progress is now defined in terms of 'how much' and 'how well' as well as learners' rate of progress. This approach will promote greater breadth and depth of learning including a greater focus on the secure development of skills and knowledge. Assessing progress across the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and when applying learning in different and unfamiliar contexts will also help teachers to plan, track progress and summarise achievement in a rounded way.

Literacy and Numeracy

Curriculum for Excellence emphasises literacy and numeracy skills and aims to develop, maintain and extend these skills. These fundamental skills are made explicit in the experiences and outcomes and developed across the curriculum with all teachers having a responsibility for their development. It is crucial that children develop these skills from the early years and sustain progress in these skills throughout their education. Teachers in schools³ will assess children's progress in literacy and numeracy using the experiences and outcomes and the guidance in the relevant *Principles and Practice* papers and further guidance which will apply to standards. Applying the strategic vision and key principles outlined in this paper will ensure that the standards and expectations in literacy and

³ Throughout this paper wherever it is used, the term 'school' should be taken to include pre-school centres, residential and day special schools (including secure provision) and primary and secondary schools.

numeracy are rigorously applied and will enable teachers to provide a robust and credible assessment of children's achievements in literacy and numeracy at all stages of their broad general education.

National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications are being developed at SCQF⁴ levels 3, 4 or 5. They will be available from S3 onwards and build on the development of literacy and numeracy skills from earlier stages. Most young people will be presented for these qualifications before they leave school. The qualifications will be awarded on the basis of a portfolio of a learner's work collected across a number of curriculum areas and a range of contexts of learning, life and work and will involve external marking by SQA. The qualifications will be flexible to meet the needs of all learners including adult learners in colleges and other settings.

Ensuring consistency

It is important to know the extent to which children and young people are achieving the relevant standards and expectations. The practices for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations involve teachers:

- working together from the guidance provided to plan learning, teaching and assessment
- building on existing standards and expectations
- drawing on exemplification
- engaging with colleagues to share and confirm expectations.

These practices apply across the curriculum from 3 to 18, including National Qualifications.

Scottish Government, education authorities and other partners will work together to build on local and national practices for quality assurance and moderation of assessment. The aim will be to achieve consistency in standards and expectations and build trust and confidence in teachers' judgements. Education authorities and national partners will work together to develop the most efficient and effective approaches possible for quality assurance and moderation.

Teachers will also have access to a new national resource - the National Assessment Resource (NAR) - which will help them as they make their judgements about progress. Using national examples of the standards which will be provided as part of the NAR will support teachers in developing consistent standards. In some areas of the curriculum, there will be additional illustrations of performances and learners' work to clarify the expected standards.

Moderation will focus particularly in the key areas of literacy and numeracy that are so important for learners. It aims to achieve consistency by:

- enabling teachers to share their understanding of standards and expectations of performance
- involving teachers in professional dialogue with colleagues
- using nationally provided exemplification illustrating achievement and progress
- focusing on the quality of assessment tasks and resources before they are used
- sampling learners' evidence and reviewing teacher's judgements.

⁴ The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is the common language of education and training in Scotland. Each qualification is allocated a level according to the demand of the qualification.

The approaches outlined below build on recent international research and development work, as well as recent work in Scotland as part of *Assessment is for Learning* and *National Qualifications*.

At school level, teachers need to have opportunities to discuss and share expectations across the curriculum with a view to achieving consistency. These expectations also apply more widely at associated schools group/cluster level, and in colleges and other providers, where examples of standards and expectations can be shared, particularly in key areas such as literacy and numeracy. Exemplification material will help to make standards and progression clearer and support reliable assessment.

External moderation will focus on the judgements teachers make and on moderation practices. **Education authorities** will have a key role in ensuring that schools have suitable arrangements in place to support teachers' judgements and focus on any action required for improvement.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) working with key partners, will ensure that standards and expectations for National Qualifications are consistent with the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and include the breadth, level of challenge and application of learning. SQA will provide external quality assurance for National Qualifications to help achieve high quality and consistency in assessment judgements and quality assurance practices within schools, education authorities and in colleges and other providers.

Reporting

Parents and learners will receive a range of information. Parents will get the regular information about their children's strengths, progress and achievements to which they are entitled. They should be informed about any gaps in their children's progress and ways that they can help. As part of this, parents will get information about their children's progress in achieving the *Curriculum for Excellence* levels in key areas of learning such as literacy and numeracy as well as performance across the curriculum. To help parents support their children's learning, it is important that teachers share full and open accounts of each learner's progress. At particular points – especially at points of transition – teachers will work with children and young people to sum up achievements through profiles. These will include summary statements of progress within and through the curriculum levels as well as progress towards qualifications in the senior phase.

In addition to individual reports on the progress of the child or young person, parents will receive information on: how well all learners and particular groups of learners are achieving; the performance of children and young people in the school in relation to expected levels at particular stages in key areas such as literacy and numeracy; and how the school is applying national standards and expectations. In relation to National Qualifications, SQA will report on learners' achievements through the Scottish Qualifications Certificate.

Schools and colleges should be able to provide an open and transparent account of how successful children and young people are in their learning and of the establishment's areas for improvement. These accounts will be based upon self-evaluation and will include consideration of the nature, population and context of the school or college. The accounts will contain a range of information on learners' progress and performance, a narrative about how well the establishment is performing, and a description of how it intends to improve the

achievement of its learners.

Informing self-evaluation for improvement

Self-evaluation in schools

The framework of quality indicators set out in *How Good is Our School?* and *Child at the Centre* provide a focus for reflecting on professional practice for improvement in schools⁵. It is important that staff in schools reflect on a wide range of sources of information. They need to have easily available valid and reliable performance data to help to identify areas of strength, aspects which prompt further questions, and scope for improvement.

Monitoring standards over time

In order to monitor national standards of performance over time, the Scottish Survey of Achievement will be adapted and fully aligned with *Curriculum for Excellence* and will focus on attainment in literacy and numeracy in schools. National standards of performance in National Qualifications can also be monitored over time through, for example, Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) analysis. Scotland is committed to active participation in international assessment surveys including Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in late primary, Trends in International Maths and Science Surveys (TIMSS) in primary and secondary, and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) at age 15. These surveys allow analysis of the performance of Scotland's children and young people over time and in comparison to other countries.

The Scottish Government will ensure that national and international surveys of achievement and performance measures are aligned fully with the purposes of learning and provide an overview of attainment in areas of priority. They will also ensure that information and data coming from such surveys help to inform improvements in learning and teaching at classroom level.

Giving an account of success at education authority and national levels

It is important that Scotland has a comprehensive system for reporting against standards and expectations and which provides information on achievement of individual learners and at class, school, educational authority and national levels. It should be aligned fully with the purposes of learning and provide information on performance which can be compared with local, national and international benchmarks.

Within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*, benchmarking at education authority and national levels should:

- prompt reflection on practice.
- be based on a broad range of valid and reliable information.
- use tools and exemplification through a nationally-provided assessment resource and moderation practices.
- relate performance to that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools and authorities.

To enable schools to use benchmarking information, the Scottish Government will develop from its previous work with education authorities a process to enable sharing of information

⁵ Each sector of education has a framework of quality indicators: others include *External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges*, *How Good is Our Community Learning and Development* and *Quality Management in Education*.

about learners' performance at school level. The Scottish Government will not collate or publish aggregate information nationally.

Education authorities will provide assurance that schools in their area are consistently applying national standards and expectations. This will include an assurance that they are participating in both local and national moderation processes and that they are using these processes thoroughly. Through the improved assessment practices and benchmarking described above, education authorities will have moderated, nationally benchmarked information about the performance of learners to assist them in meeting their statutory responsibilities including the need to secure improvement.

It is important that schools and education authorities recognise the particular purposes of assessment instruments and use the information emerging from assessment appropriately, within the boundaries for which they were intended. Education authorities should ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to encourage and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for children and young people in order to inform planning for improvement.

As part of inspections, HMIE will report on the effectiveness of improvement through self evaluation and make recommendations where practice needs to be improved. HMIE will aim where practicable, to include at least one school in every group of associated schools within its inspection programme in any one year, and will review the arrangements for moderation within that group of schools. This will support, promote and extend the quality and rigour of the moderation process and ensure regular national coverage.

Scottish Government will work with education authorities and other partners to develop processes for sharing assessment information so that education authorities can use the data to learn about the work of their schools, and where appropriate to support improvements in aspects of provision.