

Professional learning resource:

Assessing progress and achievement overarching paper

Introduction

This paper forms the introduction to a professional learning resource designed to support professional practice in assessing progress and achievement of a level within the Broad General Education. It is designed to support quality assurance and moderation activities and approaches to managing assessment. The resource is made up of the following elements:

- this introductory paper which provides generic advice and information
- a paper for each area of the curriculum¹ which provides:
 - a description of the significant aspects of learning within that area of the curriculum
 - an outline of what breadth, challenge and application look like within that area of the curriculum
 - information on planning for progression through curriculum levels, using breadth, challenge and application
 - information on monitoring and tracking progress and achievement in that area of the curriculum.
- a progression framework for many of these areas of the curriculum which describes progression within the significant aspects of learning. It is important to note that:
 - in some areas (Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Languages, Expressive Arts) progression frameworks are provided for the different components² of that curriculum area
 - in some areas of the curriculum no progression framework has been created as other resources exist which carry out this function
- exemplification of learner work, annotated by practitioners, which demonstrates the achievement of a level in each area of the curriculum or in a component.

It is intended that this professional learning resource is used as a suite of resources; each part of which complements the others. Reference to all of the parts relevant to an area of the curriculum will be more effective than a focus on a single part and will enhance the benefit of the resource to practitioners.

This professional resource builds on previous Education Scotland guidance on the curriculum, learning and assessment, including *Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment* and the

¹ In this resource, 'area of the curriculum' is used to refer to each of: Expressive Arts, Gaelic Learners, Health and Wellbeing, Health and Wellbeing (Food and Health), Health and Wellbeing (PE), Literacy and English, Literacy and Gàidhlig, Modern Languages, Religious and Moral Education, Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools, Social Studies, Sciences, Technologies.

² A component refers to a sub-section of a curriculum area in which a learner can achieve a level. For example, within the curriculum area of expressive arts it is possible to achieve a level in the components of music, drama, art and design or dance. Similarly, in the curriculum area of literacy and English it is possible to achieve a level in the components of reading, writing or listening and talking.

supporting guidance, *Principles and Practice* papers, statements of *Experiences and Outcomes* and relevant *CfE Briefings*. Links to relevant documents and resources are made throughout this paper.

How Should I Plan for Assessment?

Planning for learning and teaching involves planning for assessment. Learners should participate in this process which will involve:

- acknowledging learners' prior experiences and learning
- engaging with the experiences and outcomes and Principles and Practice papers
- planning rich learning experiences and agreeing success criteria
- using a range of appropriate assessment approaches
- using a variety of assessment evidence to moderate and make judgements on progress, in order to provide feedback and inform next steps.

Good learning intentions and success criteria are essential if assessment is to be valid. As they plan learning, teaching and assessment, practitioners use the experiences and outcomes to develop relevant learning intentions and success criteria. Good learning intentions make clear what learners should know, understand or be able to do by the end of a learning experience. The focus is on what is to be learned as opposed to the task, activity or context.

Good success criteria describe clearly how we can determine that a learning intention has been achieved. They are linked directly to the learning intention and to the evidence of learning which will be considered. Involving the learners in agreeing learning intentions and success criteria enables learners as well as practitioners to judge how much and how well each learner has learned. This also makes it easier to give quality feedback on what has been learned and informs discussion on the next steps to be taken.

The NAR Flowchart³ and associated support material provide clear details of the processes which lead to effective assessment in which the learner is placed at the centre.

What are Significant Aspects of Learning?

Within the context of assessing progress and achievement in the Broad General Education, the *significant aspects of learning* brings together a coherent body of knowledge and understanding and related skills as detailed within the experiences and outcomes. These significant aspects of learning refer to the core learning against which learners' progress can be compared periodically.

To ensure coherence, the development of significant aspects of learning have been informed by:

- the rationale underpinning the curriculum area identified in the relevant Principles and Practice paper
- key aims of learning outlined in the relevant Principles and Practice paper

³ The NAR flowchart can be found at: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/NAR-Flow-chart_tcm4-671023.pdf

- the organisation and structure of the statements of experiences and outcomes.

Therefore, the form and nature of the significant aspects of learning differs across the curriculum areas because they reflect the structure, content and underpinning rationale of the relevant curriculum area.

However, the significant aspects of learning share a number of key features. Each:

- brings together a coherent body of knowledge and understanding and related skills, as detailed in the experiences and outcomes
- is common to all levels from early to third
- can provide sound evidence of learning in accord with the principles of *Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment*
- supports the practice of holistic ('best fit') assessment
- can be effectively used to inform assessment of progression within a level and achievement of a level
- can be readily used to plan further progression within a level and from one level to the next.

Significant aspects of learning provide support to practitioners in planning and integrating learning, teaching and assessment which reflects the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. In particular, it supports practitioners and learners in planning progression as they look forward to the next level of learning. This is important at all stages of learning but especially so at transition points - from one level to the next, from one school to another, from the phase of the Broad General Education and third level to the Senior Phase and national qualifications.

Practitioners will make holistic ('best fit') judgements about the achievement of a level in a curriculum area (e.g. Social studies) or a component of a curriculum area (e.g. Physical Education, Reading, Art and design), drawing on evidence from across the relevant significant aspects of learning. This approach draws on a range of evidence which provides more robust, valid, reliable and, therefore, more valuable assessment information than assessment based on evidence derived from single brief learning experiences or one-off pieces of work.

The use of significant aspects of learning is consistent with the focus in Curriculum for Excellence on 'how much' and 'how well' rather than on 'how fast' learners progress and achieve a level. Through using the structure of significant aspects of learning, practitioners readily provide learners with opportunities to experience breadth, challenge and application in their learning in ways that meet the needs and interests of their own context. This structure provides opportunities for personalisation and choice so that each learner can enjoy challenge and learning relevant to them. Learners can thus progress by different routes and pathways through the experiences and outcomes and demonstrate progression and achievement by making use of a range of opportunities and strategies that meet their needs.

The significant aspects of learning are identified and described in the accompanying papers for each area or component of the curriculum. Progression through them is illustrated in the progression frameworks. The range and quality of learner work related to significant aspects of learning required to achieve a level are illustrated in the annotated exemplification.

What Does Progression Look Like?

Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes are designed to provide opportunities for progression *within* each level as well as towards learning at the *next* level, including progression from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase and national qualifications. Progression in learning requires that learners have opportunities to develop breadth, challenge and application of learning across a range of contexts. The significant aspects of learning and associated statements of experiences and outcomes provide the basis for planning progression through breadth, challenge and application. To demonstrate that they are making progress within a level, or to demonstrate that they have achieved a level, learners need planned opportunities to show that they:

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

As they observe the processes and outcomes of planned learning, practitioners determine when evidence related to these three features makes clear that a learner has met agreed expectations and achieved a level, either in a component (e.g. in Physical activity, sport and health) or in a curriculum area (e.g. Health and Wellbeing). This evidence and information will be used by practitioners and learners in planning progression to learning at the next level, including progression into the Senior Phase and national qualifications.

It is important that learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of standards and expectations in different ways and to progress by different routes and pathways through a significant aspect of learning. This offers opportunities to consolidate and extend learning in each area of the curriculum in order to meet learners' varied needs.

Further advice on planning progression in learning in relation to the experiences and outcomes and to progression from one level to the next or from one phase to the next can be found in *CfE Briefing 2: Assessing progress and achievement in the 3-15 broad general education*; *CfE Briefings 6, 7 & 8: Progression from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase* and *CfE Briefing 11: Planning for Learning*.

Breadth, Challenge and Application

It is important to note that:

- Breadth involves achievement in an increasing number of outcomes across the range of learning described in the experiences and outcomes
- Using a variety of assessment approaches across the significant aspect of learning allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities across the range of the experiences and outcomes.

Participating in challenging tasks and activities across the significant aspect of learning develops:

- learners' interest and confidence in their learning
- provides opportunities to develop skills, attributes and capabilities to a high level
- gives learners opportunities to demonstrate aspects of learning where they have a depth of knowledge and understanding, high levels of skill and well-developed attributes and capabilities.

In this way, learners are supported in continuing to demonstrate progression in areas of strength and interest.

Assessment also includes opportunities which allow learners to demonstrate their ability to apply learning in unfamiliar situations. Applying learning in different ways in new and unfamiliar contexts provides:

- relevance and purpose to learning
- opportunities for learners to demonstrate that their achievement of knowledge, skills and attributes can be drawn on readily, flexibly and effectively in different contexts
- confirmation that learning is secure and readily available for learners to use
- opportunities to make links across ideas and concepts from more than one curriculum area.

CfE Briefing 4: Interdisciplinary Learning provides further information on planning learning and assessment which draws on different areas of the curriculum and provides opportunities for the application of learning in a range of contexts.

How Do I Make Holistic Judgements About Achieving a Level?

Practitioners will make holistic ('best fit') judgements about the achievement of a level across a curriculum component or area.

Learners will require to demonstrate that they understand:

- a significant body of knowledge
- use a range of skills effectively
- respond consistently well to challenging learning experiences
- apply their learning in new and unfamiliar contexts.

Practitioners will therefore draw on a range of evidence from the significant aspects of learning which provide the necessary breadth, challenge and opportunities for application of learning. Judgement of achievement of a level cannot be determined by evidence related to single outcomes or provided by a single piece of work as this cannot provide evidence of secure achievement in terms of breadth, challenge and application of learning.

Evidence may be derived from classroom activities, interdisciplinary learning, the life and ethos of the school and from personal achievements, including those outwith the school.

Learners may progress more quickly in one component or area of learning than another.

How Can We Monitor and Track Progress?

Effective monitoring and tracking is informed by holistic assessment of evidence related to the significant aspects of learning in each area of the curriculum. Monitoring and tracking involves a number of processes, including:

- observation of learners
- assessment of oral and written reports
- assessment of performances and artefacts
- self-assessment and learning logs.

Learners should contribute to gathering evidence and participate in the process. Formal recording of progress should be planned so as to allow learners sufficient time to demonstrate development of their learning within significant aspects of learning. Systems for monitoring and tracking progress should recognise that learning is rarely linear and that learners, within the same group, can provide evidence of their progress in learning in different ways.

To ensure that information that is collated for sharing across or between schools is valid and reliable, it is necessary that practitioners have opportunities to work together to develop shared understandings of what progress and achievement in an area of the curriculum look like. This involves participation in a range of moderation activities. The focus needs to be on what is important in learning and on how current learning relates to progression in the significant aspects of learning in each area of the curriculum.

The processes of monitoring and tracking at establishment level draw on the same sorts of information on progression and achievement as that used to inform the monitoring and tracking of individual learners. This ensures that education authorities, schools and practitioners are working consistently and coherently to improve progression and achievement for all learners within Curriculum for Excellence.

Further information can be found in *Monitoring and tracking progress and achievement in the broad general education*, *CfE Briefing 2: Assessing progress and achievement in the broad general education* and *CfE Briefing 3: Profiling and the S3 profile*.

Responsibility of All

It is the responsibility of all practitioners to support children and young people in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in Literacy and Numeracy and their capacities in those aspects of Health and Wellbeing which are identified as the responsibility of all. Practitioners have opportunities to assess Literacy and Numeracy where these are integrated and form a substantial part of learning.

The Health and Wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes include overarching statements which describe the key features of a supportive learning environment which promotes the health and wellbeing of children and young people. These statements provide a clear and useful format and

structure for practitioners and learners to review the ways in which the learning environment supports the development of children and young people.