Monitoring and tracking progress and achievement in the broad general education

This paper is part of a suite of resources[1] and provides advice on approaches to monitoring and tracking progress and achievement in order to help inform discussion and further develop practitioner understanding.[2]

The use of a range of information to monitor and track learners' progress and achievement is a key aspect of raising attainment and achievement. The analysis of information helps to inform planning to ensure the continued and appropriate progress of all learners.

It is important that monitoring and tracking approaches are fit for purpose by using evidence from day-to-day learning and teaching and avoiding cumbersome approaches or the inappropriate use of ICT systems. [3]

Why monitor and track progress and achievement?

The purposes of monitoring and tracking are to:

- support dialogue with learners to improve learning
- help learners to understand their own learning, which they may choose to use to inform their profiling activities
- provide an overview of each learner's progress and achievement over time and to share the information (for example with parents) to promote improvements in learning
- identify strengths or lack of progress in order to intervene as appropriate

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[1] Professional learning resources on assessing progress and achievement and annotated exemplification of achievement of a level can be found on the Education Scotland website
[2] It might be useful to consider this paper alongside Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 3: *Profiling and the S3 profile*.
[3] See paper entitled Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy.

- provide a focus for professional dialogue, further assessment and moderation activities

- help staff to review their practice in order to support learners further

- ensure that evidence from partners and parents, as appropriate for young people, is included in planning future learning

- support analysis of the relative progress of different groups of learners across a school, stage or department. For example, by gender; ethnicity; those with additional support needs; those with high/low achievement or attainment or progress across different curriculum areas.

What information should be monitored and tracked?

The monitoring and tracking of progress and achievement may include the following:

- planning related to experiences and outcomes (Es and Os) to ensure learners receive their entitlement to a broad general education

- professional judgements about how well learners are progressing and achieving, based on a wide range of evidence suitable for supporting discussions with learners, parents and with staff across classes, stages, departments and whole school/establishment

- progress in significant aspects of learning for the curriculum area[4] and evidence of breadth, challenge and application of learning in order to provide an overview of learning within a level

- a summary of how well learners are progressing in relation to achieving their learning goals, including personal achievements, to develop the skills, attributes and capabilities of the four capacities within different contexts of learning

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[4] Information on significant aspects of learning can be found on the Education Scotland website

- details of learners' progress and achievement through the Curriculum for Excellence levels in all curriculum areas and in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

Points to note

Although monitoring and tracking may relate to Es and Os, there is a danger that focusing on tracking individual Es and Os will lead to a fragmentation of learning and insufficient emphasis on the depth of learning related to application and challenge. It might also result in a lack of focus on how learning relates to the 'big picture' of progression within and through levels.

It is what practitioners do with the information arising from monitoring and tracking processes that really matters. The focus should be on information that supports discussions about planning, learning, teaching and approaches to assessment so as to ensure continued appropriate progress, support and challenge in learning.

What should monitoring and tracking processes look like?

Schools and other establishments are building on their existing approaches to monitoring and tracking in order to support discussions about progress and achievement with children and young people in terms of breadth, challenge and application of learning. To be effective, monitoring and tracking processes should be accessible and manageable and provide valid, up-to-date and useful information.

Schools may use a paper-based or spreadsheet approach or a Management Information System (MIS) to help them in the process of recording progress and achievement. However, it is vital that such approaches have a clear and appropriate focus on supporting both learning and professional dialogue. Most importantly, approaches should not be overly complex, bureaucratic, time-consuming, or unnecessarily impinge on time for learning and teaching.

Point to note

Monitoring and tracking is based on discussions which support learning. Approaches must always be manageable and sustainable.[5]

How does dialogue contribute to effective monitoring and tracking?

Dialogue at all levels is integral to monitoring and tracking.

Learner and teacher dialogue

The monitoring and tracking of learning needs to involve the learner in partnership with the teacher as part of ongoing learning conversations. Increasingly, through their involvement in reflective dialogue, learners are developing the necessary skills required to support their own learning.

Learner/teacher conversations may relate to:

- on-going classwork aligned to learning intentions and success criteria
- learning goals or targets for units of work/topics/interdisciplinary learning
- key pieces of evidence or assessment tasks that relate to agreed success criteria
- evidence of learning linked to significant aspects of learning
- holistic judgements, based on evidence which shows that a learner has achieved a level in a curriculum area.

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[5] See paper entitled Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy.

Consequently, when developing a profile, the discussions between learners and classroom practitioners should be about:

- what the learner knows, understands and can do, in pupil-friendly language

- how well they are progressing in their learning with a focus on how well they are meeting the success criteria related to their learning goals or targets for current tasks and activities

- considering an individual's quality and pace of learning in relation to their longer term learning goals linked, in turn, to their application of learning in appropriately challenging contexts

- identifying and recognising learners' personal achievements both within and outside of school.

Key to bringing this process together, is the learner's relationship with a member of staff who knows them well and can help them reflect upon, and understand, their learning. The quality and on-going nature of the discussions with this member of staff are critical in securing effective engagement with learners and supporting the profiling process.

Points to note

Having a range of information available supports on-going discussions with learners. These discussions also allow learners to reflect on their progress and develop the skills to support their own learning. This in turn contributes further to the monitoring and tracking process.

For the learner, there needs to be the opportunity, at some point, to record the information they wish to capture as part of the profiling process including retaining their 'latest and best' work. (e.g. personal learning plans, logs, diaries and e-portfolios).

Professional dialogue on learners' progress

Professional dialogue at all levels includes discussions with stage partners or departmental colleagues, takes account of prior achievements and influences future learning. Consequently, professional dialogue is fundamental to tracking learners' progress and achievement.

By reflecting upon approaches to quality assurance and moderation as outlined in *Building the Curriculum 5* [6] practitioners will:

- develop a **shared understanding** of what good progress looks like which improves the **validity** and **reliability** of the information that is tracked
- develop **confidence** and **trust** in teachers' **professional judgements** about learners' progress.

Moderation activities will support staff in the consistency of their judgements about progress and achievement. The moderation process[7] begins with the learner and allows staff to:

- **plan together** for learning, teaching and assessment
- agree **learning intentions** setting out standards and expectations
- generate clear and measurable **success criteria**
- design rich **learning experiences**
- discuss a range of **appropriate evidence**
- select suitable **assessment approaches**
- **evaluate** learning
- identify **next steps** and suitable **feedback**
- **report** on progress

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[6] Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment, page 35.
[7] As exemplified in the NAR flowchart

Point to note

The key to improving the validity and reliability of the information that is collated and tracked is staff working together to develop a shared understanding of what good progress and achievement look like. This involves participation in a range of moderation activities. The focus needs to be on what is important in learning and being clear about how current learning relates to the 'big picture' of progression within and through levels in different curriculum areas (i.e. the significant aspects of learning).

Professional dialogue at department/stage and whole school/establishment level

The focus of whole school/establishment monitoring and tracking is to generate dialogue about the progress of learners so that head teachers/depute heads/principal teachers can work with and support practitioners to improve learning further. The information from discussions needs to be sufficient to give confidence in the progress of learners across the school/establishment, but should be summary in nature since it is underpinned by the detail held by teachers for individual learners or groups of learners.

The information can:

- lead to decisions in terms of further support for individuals or groups of learners.
- help identify patterns and trends
- provide concise information on learners' progress at a moment in time
- allow comparisons of how well learners are progressing and achieving across the curriculum, over time and in relation to historical information about previous groups of learners.

Fundamentally, the clear purpose of such analyses is to improve outcomes for learners. The key is to ensure that the approaches used are designed to support learning and that processes

and systems reflect the principles of Building the Curriculum 5, including the advice on moderation.

In order to make monitoring and tracking accessible and easy to manage, schools and other establishments are developing short hand annotations to record their judgements about how well learners are progressing. For such approaches to be successful, staff need to discuss and agree the criteria in order to ensure consistency and the reliability of recorded information. Whatever methods are used, it is important that they are not merely bureaucratic constructs but, simply and appropriately, capture the range of learners' successes and help to support future learning.

Point to note

Many establishments and education authorities have tried tracking using the terms developing, consolidating and secure and have moved away from such an approach since it did not support on-going dialogue with learners or because of concerns about the reliability and complexity of such information. The interconnected nature of these categories needs to be stressed and it is, therefore, important to avoid an approach which uses these terms in a way which emphasises linear progression. For this reason, the use of developing, consolidating and secure is not suited for use in monitoring and tracking at whole school/establishment level and should be used with care in reporting the progress of individual learners to parents.

What information will support monitoring and tracking?

Staff will have a range of up-to-date, manageable and appropriate information which supports dialogue about future learning and may relate to:

- day-to-day planners

- medium and long-term plans for programmes and courses/schemes of work (e.g. providing an overview of learning for the term /for a level and beyond)

- class records of additional support needs and interventions/support in place

- learning goals/targets for individuals and groups

- evidence of learners' work.

At whole school level, it is important to avoid gathering information that does not serve a specific purpose. Care should be taken to ensure focused use of management information systems to avoid generating excessive data. Instead, their purpose should be to support learning and professional dialogue.

Point to note

Tracking progress and achievement is important. However, there is no need to produce large folios of evidence to support this. Appropriately recording/retaining evidence, which may take a variety of forms, needs to be manageable and sustainable. All such information should inform professional dialogue and be used to support judgements about evaluating progress, providing feedback and agreeing next steps in learning.[8]

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[8] See paper entitled Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy

What features of effective monitoring and tracking support improvements in learners' progress and achievement?

The nature of the information and the focus of discussions will vary at learner, class, department and whole school/establishment level. At all levels, it is important to take account of information derived from parents and other partners who have a role in the education of children and young people.

Staff are involved in a range of activities which support overall monitoring and tracking. For example, the monitoring of planning continues to be a key feature. In addition, staff engage in discussions about the overall quality of courses and programmes, for example, through:

- providing appropriate opportunities for covering the range of learning related to the Es and Os and significant aspects of learning
- approaches to meeting learners' needs by different routes and pathways through learning
- opportunities to revisit, extend and apply learning in appropriately challenging ways.

On-going monitoring activities include:

- working in partnership with learners
- observing learning in action
- sampling learners' work
- staff discussion on the quality of learning intentions and success criteria
- staff discussion on consistency of assessment and feedback to learners, reviewing how well learners know what they need to do to improve their learning.

Professional dialogue and moderation activities with other staff, including partners, support the process of evaluating learner progress. The focus includes identification of learners at risk of

underachieving, ones who are progressing very well and evaluating the success of interventions made to meet learners' needs**.**

Point to note

Most important, is the agreed action to be taken in relation to making adjustments to planning and provision. This includes what needs to be done and by whom in the short, medium and long term to ensure that every learner makes appropriate progress through the setting of high expectations, alongside support and challenge in their learning.

Monitoring and tracking is important for informing and supporting learners and their learning. The emphasis needs to be on *how* the information is gathered and used – principally through dialogue at all levels – rather than what structure or system is in place.