There are three key messages for Assessment in Argyll & Bute:

**Assessment is integral to learning and teaching**
- It involves all stakeholders, most importantly the learner
- It is ongoing, periodic, at times of transition

**Assessment builds capacity in practitioners to make professional judgements underpinned by professional dialogue**
- Assessment requires a variety of approaches generating a body of quality evidence
- Assessment and moderation are integral to each other

**Assessment is holistic and informative**
- It has many purposes, the most important of which is to support the learner journey
- It goes beyond knowledge and understanding alone to include skills, attributes and capabilities

The Scottish Government has the aspirational aim that Scotland will be the best place in the world for a child to be educated. Argyll & Bute has the aspirational aim of being the best place in Scotland for a child to be educated.

The aim of Curriculum for Excellence is:
to ensure that all children and young people in Scotland develop the knowledge, skills and attributes they will need if they are to flourish in life, learning and work, now and in the future.

**How can Assessment & Moderation help to achieve this aim?**

What is Moderation?
‘Moderation is the term used to describe approaches for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations for the broad general education. It involves teachers, and other professionals as appropriate, working together, drawing on guidance and exemplification and building on existing standards and expectations to:
- Plan learning, teaching and assessment
- Check that assessment tasks and activities provide learners with fair and valid opportunities to meet the standards and expectations before assessments are used
- Sample evidence from learners’ work and review teachers’ judgements
- Agree strengths in learners’ performances and next steps in learning
- Provide feedback on teachers’ judgements to inform improvements in practices’

(BtC5 – Moderation)
The following must be in place in our educational establishments to help us to arrive at a shared understanding of standards and expectations:
1. The learner must be placed at the centre of their ‘Learning Journey’ and have ownership over their learning.
2. Learners, parents/carers and teachers must work in partnership to provide the best opportunities for each learner.
3. All teachers must participate in quality and focused professional dialogue to ensure that the curriculum in each school is aspirational.
4. Personal achievement is recognised in every aspect of the learner’s life.

This Toolkit focuses on ensuring that quality assessment and moderation practices can take place in and between schools on a regular and planned basis.

**The Toolkit**
Assessment and moderation may seem to be a complex task and many teachers may wonder where they can begin. Through using the toolkit, this process will become manageable for all and provide a quality focus for professional dialogue and school improvement.

The toolkit can be used for different purposes and by different groups of teachers. It can be used to:
* Discuss the progression of skills in particular curricular subjects form early level to third level.
* Come to a shared understanding of when a child can be judged to be ‘secure’ at any particular level.
* Audit curricular subjects in the school’s curriculum plan, focusing on the seven principles of curriculum design.
* Challenge teachers to consider their practice in terms of the lessons they plan and the experiences they give learners in their care.
* Challenge schools to consider the quality and standard of their curriculum and the opportunities they are giving the learners across the four contexts for learning.

The toolkit can be used by a group of teachers within a school, a department, across a school, teachers in a cluster, schools in a cluster. It is flexible and will suit a range of purposes. It will continue to grow and develop over time.

The toolkit contains:
* An implementation guide
* A set of overview sheets setting out a progression of key skills, significant aspects of learning and audit statements
* A discussion and action point record sheet
* A tracking sheet
* An audit sheet for the 7 Principles of Curriculum Design
**What has the toolkit to do with raising standards of achievement?**

‘Quality assurance helps to support teachers and build expertise and capacity in the education system to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people. Through sharing, understanding and applying standards and expectations, quality assurance helps to raise standards and expectations, and levels of consistency across teachers and schools. Quality assurance in education is part of the day-to-day work of pre-school centres, primary, special and secondary schools, services and local authorities. Staff use a wide range of activities to ensure that high standards are maintained and outcomes improved for children and young people.’

(BtC5 - Quality Assurance and Moderation)

**Key Elements of Assessment & Moderation**

The NAR Flowchart shows when we should think about assessment

* At the beginning of the teaching and learning process
* Planning stage
* While developing learning intentions
* While developing success criteria with the learners
* When planning the evidence to gather
* When evaluating the learning
* At the end to provide feedback and next steps

The NAR Chart is a tool that places assessment and moderation within the process of teaching and learning, providing a HOLISTIC APPROACH.

By ensuring that the NAR process is used, a firm foundation is in place to improve quality professional dialogue on teaching and learning.
At the heart of Curriculum for Excellence sits the Four Capacities: Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, Effective Contributors.

Within the Four Capacities are the capabilities and attributes, which describe all the qualities which every child needs to achieve his or her potential. Through using the toolkit, teachers will be able to gather quality evidence of where and when their curriculum and teaching provides opportunities for learners to develop attributes and capabilities.

In the toolkit, key questions are asked -
* Is the curriculum/lesson relevant to the learner’s needs and interests?
* Are opportunities given to develop a range of skills in a variety of contexts and settings?
* Are opportunities given to learn in a variety of groupings and settings?

Through discussing a range of such questions, action points will be developed to improve learning opportunities and to enhance teacher’s practice.

**How will the toolkit help me to judge when a learner is secure at a level?**

Some points to consider when using the overviews:
* How well is a child learning?
* How much has the child learned and moved on?
* How much evidence has been gathered on development of key skills?
* Are skills used with growing independence?
* Can a child talk about their learning?
* Has the child achieved the agreed success criteria?
* Have they learned enough to move on?
* Has targeted support been successful?
* What does the child think?
* Would more teaching/a different approach make a significant difference to the child?
* Does the child have a sufficient foundation in place to build upon?
* What are our benchmarks for ‘secure’ learning and are these too high/too low?
* Have we carried out moderation out with our own school?

‘Secure’ may not necessarily mean that there is learning in depth across all key areas of literacy and numeracy. ‘Secure’ mean that an agreement has been reached amongst teachers, through developing a shared understanding, within the school and across schools, of how much learning must be in place for progression to be worthwhile to the learner.

**Not all learners will be able to have a deep understanding of all aspects of the curriculum. This does not mean that they are not able to progress and continue with meaningful learning.**
Teachers are not being asked to change their practice, but to make current practice even more effective. Currently in Argyll and Bute, teachers are expected to use the NAR model of planning to ensure learning experiences are appropriate and meet the needs of every child.

Through professional dialogue, teachers can work towards a shared understanding of the curriculum and classroom practice. As evidence of progress is gathered, teachers can meet with other colleagues to further validate their shared understanding. For more information on how to use the Toolkit, please read the ‘Implementation Guide’.

**Transition**
The toolkit promotes effective communication both within and across settings. Meaningful assessment evidence of progress for each learner can be gathered and next steps identified through regular moderation meetings with colleagues. By sharing the toolkit, practitioners in different settings can focus on areas such as coherence in the curriculum and the continuous development of skills as learners move from one setting to the next. The concept of a ‘fresh start’ in S1 will clearly be seen as insupportable as each child’s ‘Learning Journey’ is made explicit as key skills are developed from three year olds through to the end of S3. The Developmental Milestones Toolkit will also support practitioners at points of transition.

**Parental Involvement**
Parents would, no doubt, also benefit from becoming familiar with the toolkit. It is vital that parents are part of the learning partnership and are given the opportunity to understand the progression of skills and the design of the four areas of the curriculum. The toolkit can be used to support this process.

**Conclusion**
Session 2014-15 is be a pilot year for the toolkit. Schools will have the opportunity to provide feedback on its impact on learning and teaching. By working together to improve and implement the toolkit, it is hoped that schools can go from strength to strength make a difference to every child’s life chances in Argyll and Bute and together make it the best place for a child to learn in Scotland.