

Assessment within BGE 2020/21 (Update)

April 2021

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The following guidance builds upon [Assessment within BGE 2020/21](#) (June 2020) and has been updated to reflect considerations for approaches to assessment in the current context as children and young people return to in-person learning.

The return to in-person learning provides opportunities to assess children and young people's progress and discuss next steps to ensure learning remains progressive for all children and young people.

The guidance also takes into consideration findings from the [national overview of practice reports](#) on the delivery of remote learning and the [Equity Audit](#).

The [National Overview of Practice: Reports](#) published by HMI during the January-March 2021 phase of lockdown reported that the most recent period of remote learning has presented potential challenges in relation to tracking and monitoring children and young people's progress in learning. Despite these challenges, practitioners have identified a range of mechanisms and approaches to monitor progress and provide feedback on learning to children and young people and their parents or carers. In many cases, this has included daily opportunities for children and young people to discuss tasks and activities and share feedback about their learning.

The purpose of this guidance is to support practitioners to re-engage with how they will approach assessment as part of their planning for learning and teaching as schools and early years establishments return to in-person learning. In a letter to local authorities outlining the June 2021 collection of ACEL data, Scottish Government advised that *"given there was no collection of data in 2020, ACEL data this year will be particularly helpful in supporting our understanding of the impact that COVID-19 has had on children and young people's achievements and on the attainment gap"*.

When planning assessment approaches, sensitivity to the needs of children and young people should be taken into account. Use of formal assessment procedures may be less appropriate for some learners and a more informal approach may be more suitable. Assessment should relate to the previous learning that has taken place and should inform practitioners'¹ decision making about what to prioritise in the coming months with a particular emphasis on equity.

Assessment of progress and learning needs will also support considerations for school improvement, including planning in the context of Pupil Equity Fund plans. Considerations for assessment and support for health and wellbeing needs, which will be a priority for practitioners across all sectors, is outwith the scope of this guidance².

This guidance document has two sections with relevant links embedded throughout and will help to support professional judgements as part of the wider moderation process.

Section 1 offers key principles in order to support children and young people to make progress when returning to in-person learning.

Section 2 offers a practical guide to support assessment of children and young people's progress.

The following sections should be considered alongside established assessment tools and approaches used in settings to meet the individual needs of children and young people and to build on positives identified from remote learning.

¹ For the purpose of this guidance the term practitioners refers to teachers and early years practitioners.

² More details can be found at [Wellbeing Profile: Glasgow Motivation and Wellbeing Profile \(GMWP\) | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Section 1 - Key Principles

Purposes of assessment

- Assessment is integral to planning of learning and teaching. A variety of assessment approaches can be used to allow children and young people to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities in different contexts across the curriculum.
- Careful consideration requires to be given to the purpose of any particular assessment. This will involve consideration of the types of information being sought as a result of the assessment. For example, different types of assessment will be used if the intention is to provide diagnostic information as opposed to monitoring understanding, knowledge and skills. Being clear on the purposes of assessment will help decision making about choosing the best type of assessment to provide the information required and whether formative strategies such as self and peer assessment could provide the requisite information.

Achievement of a level

- At key milestones, assessments should provide reliable evidence which can be used to report on the progress of children and young people. This involves ensuring that we have shared expectations for standards to be achieved and have robust arrangements for moderation across stages and the curriculum.
- Achievement of a level is based on teachers' overall professional judgement, informed by evidence. Assessment judgements should be based on the Benchmarks for each curriculum level. The Benchmarks are designed to support teacher professional judgement of both progress towards and achievement of a level. It is not necessary for learners to demonstrate evidence of every aspect of learning within the Benchmarks before moving on to the next level. However, it is important that this is interpreted in ways which ensure no major gaps in children and young people's learning, for example with respect to the relevant organisers in each curriculum area.

Children and young people's voice

- Children and young people should be fully involved in the assessment of learning, giving them an active voice and role in decision making and setting of next steps. Regular learner conversations and high-quality feedback will ensure that children and young people understand what is expected of them, their strengths and the areas where they need to improve.
- Approaches which build on the experiences and progress of children and young people before and during any period of remote and blended learning are preferable in some instances. Using a strengths-based approach, focussing on what children and young people can do and not what they cannot do or have missed may be the most beneficial approach. Likewise it may be important to involve parents and carers in conversations to allow practitioners to build a better understanding of individual circumstances.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment

- It is essential that the learning of all children and young people continues to progress and that the needs of each individual is met. The [four contexts of learning](#) offer children and young people a wide range of opportunities for assessment of progress.
- Continue to use a range of formative and summative assessment strategies to build up an accurate picture of strengths, gaps and areas for further development. This will include high quality assessments (see appendix).
- On any return from periods of remote and blended learning, a dialogic approach, centred on listening, talking and observing, may be used as a first stage in gathering formative information about children and young people's learning needs.
- Follow the learning, teaching and assessment cycle (moderation cycle) to plan next steps in learning based on the assessment information.
- When assessing children and young people's progress within the BGE, features of assessment (listed below) as described in [Curriculum for Excellence guidance](#) should be used i.e. learners:
 - Explain their thinking to show their understanding of concepts.
 - Demonstrate the full range of skills and knowledge set out within the experiences and outcomes.
 - Identify the most appropriate skills and knowledge required and apply to unfamiliar contexts.
 - Apply skills when working independently and with others.
- Use assessment approaches to explore children and young people's skills, knowledge and understanding within the appropriate level taking account of learning that will have taken place throughout session 2020/21. Due to context and experiences this will vary across sectors and establishments.
- Digital technology has transformed the potential capacity for self and peer assessment. Practitioners should consider how to continue to develop and embed digital approaches to self and peer assessment.
- SNSA/MCNG will be available for diagnostic purposes for P1, P4, P7 and S3 until the end session (see appendix).

Partnerships and collaboration

- Review the agreed expectations between and across teams and departments as to how documenting and recording progress has met the current demands. Engagement and progress of all children and young people should have been tracked across the session. This will support the professional judgements of teachers and practitioners including the collection of ACEL data in June 2021.
- Transition information and conversations between practitioners should be detailed and clear to inform progress and next steps. This includes [early years to primary](#), between stages, [primary to secondary](#) and BGE to senior phase.
- Ensure parents are involved in the reporting process that gives clear information on progress and next steps.
- Continue to develop moderation and planning between and across practitioner teams to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations.

Section 2: Assessing the progress of children and young people

The following steps should be considered when assessing the progress of children and young people. **These steps are not prescriptive** and should be used alongside a deeper understanding of the [learning, teaching and assessment \(moderation\) cycle](#).

Step 1: Deciding what to assess

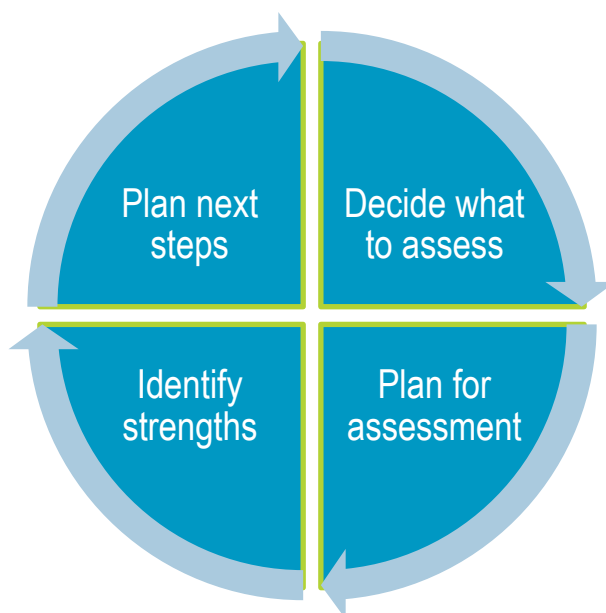
- Choose the curriculum area / organiser(s) you want to focus on.
- Choose a context in which to assess the organisers.

Step 2: Planning for assessment

- Identify and bundle relevant [Experiences and Outcomes](#) and consider appropriate [Benchmarks](#) that will support assessment. Focus on the key concepts and the knowledge, understanding and skills you expect children and young people to have.
- Use forward planning from this session, previous assessments, learning activities and tasks - including those carried out during the period of remote learning - to support evaluations of the progress made by children and young people.
- Where available, use school or local authority progression frameworks to identify the specific skills, knowledge and understanding children and young people might have and use these to plan your discussions with them.

Step 3: Identifying what children and young people can do; What their strengths are?

- A range of approaches, including **peer and self-assessment**, can be used to identify what children and young people can do and what their next steps in learning are. Covid restrictions may mean that peer assessment needs to be modified.
- Consider where **individual or small group work** with children and young people is most effective in enabling you to assess levels of understanding.
- **Questioning** is a key part of good dialogue between practitioner and child or young person. The range and style of questions you use will need careful planning and be age/stage appropriate.
- Use **starter questions** linked to previous learning to promote dialogue and support deeper thinking. Examples of these are:
 - What can you tell me about...?
 - How could you sort these?
 - Why have you done it that way?
 - What happens when we...?
 - What can be done when...?
 - Give an example of...



- More **in-depth questions** may follow to identify what learners know and to clarify next steps in learning. You may wish to refer to Blooms Taxonomy to support your design of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) questions. Below are some examples:
 - Remembering: List, define, describe, show, name, what, when.
 - Understanding: Summarise, compare and contrast, estimate, discuss.
 - Applying: Apply, calculate, complete, show, solve, modify.
 - Analysing: Separate, arrange, classify, explain, analyse.
 - Creating: Integrate, modify, design, create, what if..., formulate, generalise.
 - Evaluating: Assess, rank, test, explain, discriminate, support.
- A next stage might be to plan opportunities to allow children and young people to demonstrate **breadth, challenge** and **application** of their learning through high quality assessment.
- Spend time with children and young people discussing and explaining their **thinking**. This will be beneficial as it will allow you to see what the understanding is for each learner to **support planning for next steps** at this level and whether or not they need further reinforcement at the previous level.
- The use of effective feedback that informs next steps in learning is crucial. Plan and provide opportunities to support self and peer **reflection and review**. For example, children and young people could note what they can do with ease and what problems they found more challenging in relation to specific activities.

Step 4: Planning next steps

- Children and young people should be at the heart of planning learning, teaching and assessment. For example, learning intentions should be shared with children and young people and they should be involved in the co-creation of success criteria.
- From your discussions with learners you will have a good idea of what they can do and which areas need reinforcement.
- Next steps may be different for each child or young person depending on their prior learning.
- A bespoke programme of work may be beneficial for a short period of time to reinforce different areas of learning for some children and young people.
- Consider the validity of available evidence in terms of progress through and achievement of CfE levels.
- Engage in professional dialogue with colleagues (stage/level partners) to moderate and plan collegiately at all stages of the learning, teaching and assessment (moderation) cycle. Education Scotland has produced guidance on setting up digital moderation that can be found on the [Moderation Hub](#).

APPENDIX

SNSA/MCNG

The [purpose and use guidance](#) for national standardised assessments in Scotland makes clear that assessments should be delivered as part of routine learning. This means the assessments have not been made available to children who are learning remotely. Only children and young people who are in school, with access to the support they would usually receive, can undertake the assessments (whether MCNG or SNSA).

As children and young people return to school, it will be important for teachers to understand their progress in learning, to help them tailor support plans for individual learners. The Scottish Government remains committed to making the national standardised assessments available to use in schools. As always, the SNSA and MCNG represent just one assessment tool as part of the approach to assessment in the broad general education. It is not expected for schools to focus disproportionately on standardised assessments or to divert children and young people away from learning to complete them.

The MCNG and SNSA have been designed to enable children and young people to undertake the assessments at any point within the school session. The timing of assessment delivery remains a matter for teachers and schools, in consultation with local authorities. As in previous years, decisions should be made after considering the individual needs and wellbeing of children and young people, the diagnostic purpose of national standardised assessment and the way in which teachers and schools intend to use information.

HIGH QUALITY ASSESSMENTS

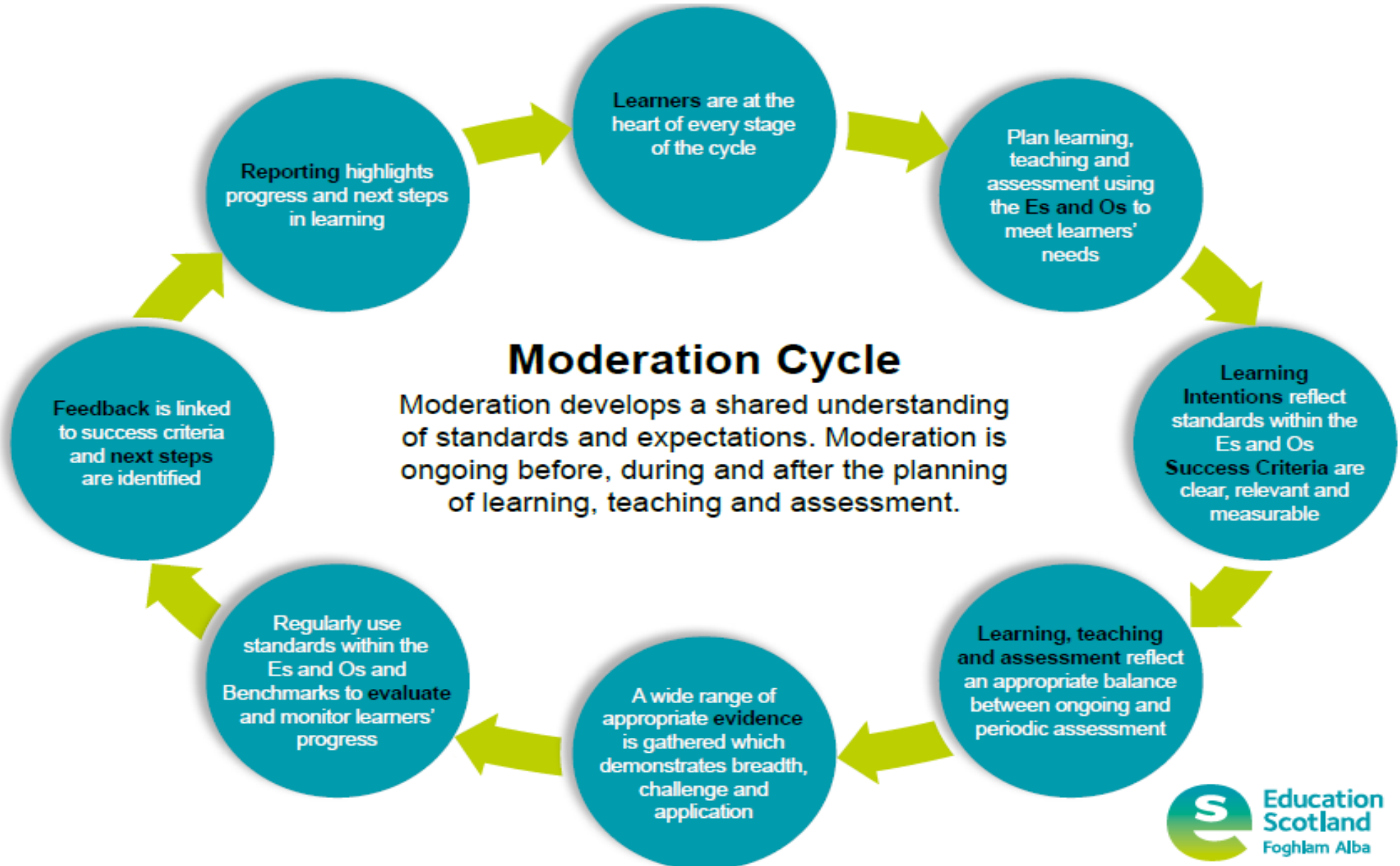
High quality assessments ARE:

- Considered assessments, used periodically, throughout the year and across a level to form part of the evidence base for progress through and achievement of a level.
- Created when planning for learning and teaching.
- Carefully constructed selecting Es and Os from planned learning to assess breadth of previously taught concepts and for planned new contexts for learning.
- Carefully constructed to provide the appropriate level of challenge i.e. what skills are required from learners.
- Carefully constructed to provide the application of prior learning (knowledge and skills) to new and unfamiliar contexts.

High quality assessments are NOT:

- A large amount of unnecessary evidence
- An end of unit assessment.
- The only assessment evidence to be considered as part of progress through and achievement CfE levels.

LEARNING, TEACHING & ASSESSMENT (MODERATION) CYCLE



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