

Progression from the Broad General Education (BGE) to the Senior Phase – updated guidance

This guidance is for schools, local authorities and their partners. It has been produced as an action from the Ministerial Assessment and National Qualifications Group. It is designed to help to support improvements in learning for young people and secure reductions in workload for teachers.

The Working Group highlighted that assessment-related workload has often become unacceptably high for both teachers and learners. There are a number of contributory factors.

Some of these factors relate to the design and operation of the National Qualifications. These issues are being addressed by the SQA. Following actions detailed in the Working Group report, the SQA has also published [detailed subject-by-subject plans for changes in 2016-17 and beyond](#).

However, the Group's report highlighted other key factors that are contributing to workload and this note directly addresses these. It focuses on :

- curriculum and programme design;
- assessment in the Broad General Education (BGE) phase; and
- arrangements for tracking and monitoring learners' progress

This guidance builds on a range of previously-published [advice](#) and [guidance](#), including [CfE Briefings 6, 7 and 8](#) on Progression from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase. However, this update now takes full account of good practice and lessons learned from experience of implementing the new Senior Phase in schools and local authorities across Scotland.

As schools and local authorities make use of the flexibility they now have in designing learning, teaching and assessment arrangements (including the number of courses learners typically follow at each year in the Senior Phase), great care needs to be taken to ensure that these local arrangements do not create unnecessary workload demands for teachers or learners.

Schools should be clear that applying this guidance will assist directly in reducing workload. All schools have a responsibility to do so.

1. Transition from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase

During S3, schools should prepare young people to make a smooth transition from BGE Experiences and Outcomes into courses leading to qualifications, [other awards](#) and work-based learning, as appropriate to their needs. New National Qualifications have been designed to build on the Experiences and Outcomes of the BGE.

In many cases, key aspects of learning at CfE third and fourth levels during the BGE will be directly relevant to learning which will need to be demonstrated to gain a qualification. Schools should take this explicitly into account in planning their BGE provision.

In S3, young people should therefore have opportunities to:

- complete their entitlement to a BGE, including all of the Experiences and Outcomes to third level, across all curriculum areas;
 - specialise and extend their learning into fourth curriculum level Experiences and Outcomes and beyond wherever they are capable of doing so; and
- experience learning and make progress which paves the way to success in qualifications and other learning in the Senior Phase. (Learning in S3 can and should contribute to the '160 hours of directed study' associated with a national qualification – see below.)

2. Ensuring appropriate course choice and presentation

Schools must ensure that young people are placed at the right course level as they enter the Senior Phase. It is not appropriate to start young people off on a course leading to a qualification they are not expected to achieve. Equally, it is important not to slow learners' progress by placing them on courses at too low a level.

- Schools need to use robust assessment information from the BGE to ensure that learners make appropriate choices and are presented at the right level for qualifications. This will avoid excessive workload for teachers and unnecessary assessments for learners.
- Courses for National 5 qualifications, in particular, are built on the assumption that learners have achieved relevant CfE fourth level Experiences and Outcomes before beginning the N5 course. Schools should take careful account of this, when options for S4 are being agreed. Choosing courses at N4 or less advanced levels will be more appropriate for some, potentially with further progression to higher levels thereafter.
- Schools should not present young people for the N4 Added Value Unit if they are predicted to achieve well at N5 level. Doing so adds unnecessarily to the workload of both teachers and learners.

3. Numbers of courses in S4 and beyond

Concern has sometimes been expressed that Curriculum for Excellence places tight constraints on the numbers of courses which can be studied by young people in S4. This relates in part to the fact that SQA National Courses are based on 160 hours of directed

study and a mistaken assumption that no learning occurring before S4 can contribute towards this notional time allocation.

Although formal qualification courses will not begin before S4, learning which takes place in the BGE can and should contribute to learning for qualifications. This can and should be done without compromising the entitlement to a Broad General Education in S3.

- The number and range of courses undertaken in S4, S5 or S6 is a matter for schools, local authorities, parents and young people to decide, taking into account young people's individual needs.
- **Schools should provide learning in S3 which rounds off effectively the BGE phase and, at the same time, covers learning which will prepare young people well for qualification courses they may follow in S4.**
- This means that some National 4 or National 5 Unit Outcomes or Assessment Standards may well be overtaken in S3.
- During S4, learners may be studying for some qualifications which will result in presentation at the end of S4. They may equally continue studying over two years in some subjects until the end of S5 before being presented for a qualification. The same may apply across S5 and S6, with qualifications being taken over one or two years.
- **With this in mind, schools should plan for young people to progress smoothly on to following anything between six and eight qualification courses from S4 onwards, with certification of each over a mix of one or two years, as appropriate to their individual needs.**
- In all cases, smart and streamlined tracking and monitoring of young people's progress is essential to ensure that they are making appropriate progress for the qualification by key dates.

4. Progression pathways to meet learners' needs

Schools should ensure that young people's needs, interests and aspirations inform the decisions that are made about the progression pathways they follow through BGE and into the Senior Phase.

- Effective approaches to assessment and to tracking and monitoring young people's progress throughout the BGE and Senior Phase are essential to informing these decisions.

Schools should be using the flexibility of Curriculum for Excellence to develop new progression pathways to ensure they can meet the needs and aspirations of all young people, to raise attainment and to ensure all their learners move into sustained and positive destinations beyond the Senior Phase. That includes developing new pathways to motivate groups of learners who may have been less well served by secondary school provision in the past.

- To meet the range of young people's needs, the Senior Phase curriculum should be developed with partners which may include neighbouring schools, colleges and other education providers. This will help to ensure a broader range of progression pathways and access to a wider range of qualifications, including those with a direct application to employment.

Where schools are designing provision to meet the needs of individuals or groups of learners with additional support needs they will often develop more customised curricular programmes through the BGE and Senior Phase, designed to ensure these learners receive their full entitlement and achieve their potential.

5. Effective assessment 3-18

Schools must have effective assessment throughout the BGE, as well as in the Senior Phase. This is central to effective decision-making about preparation and presentation for qualifications. As part of our commitment to supporting implementation of the National Improvement Framework, Education Scotland is currently providing advice and support for local authorities and schools to improve teachers' confidence in assessing learners' achievement of CfE levels in [literacy and numeracy](#).

By the end of 2016, Education Scotland will provide similar advice and support on assessing whether learners have achieved a CfE level in particular curriculum areas. This will help ensure teachers and parents have the right information available to ensure young people are following appropriate progression pathways as they move from S3 into the Senior Phase.

6. Effective self-evaluation

Schools and local authorities should use the newly revised [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#) to evaluate their work, to support professional discussion and reflection, and to help plan for improvements.

In particular, Quality Indicator 2.2 Curriculum has key features of effective practice and challenge questions which will help with planning, evaluating and improving the curriculum.

* Below are full URL to the above links

Title	Link
SQA	http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45625.html
Building the Curriculum 3	https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/btc3.pdf
Building the Curriculum 4	https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/btc4.pdf
Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 6	https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-briefing-6.pdf
Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 7	https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-briefing-7.pdf
Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 8	https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/cfe-briefing-8.pdf
Amazing Things	http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/resources/amazing-things.htm
NIF materials - literacy & numeracy	https://education.gov.scot/improvement/assess7-achievement-of-a-level
How good is our school	https://www.education.gov.scot/improvement/frwk2hgios