

A guide for practitioners

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# CfE Briefing

## Curriculum for Excellence: Profiling and the S3 profile

Scottish education is going through a period of significant and important change to its curriculum, learning and teaching, and the processes that underpin them. Education Scotland is supporting this change by evaluating and sharing evolving practice as part of a national professional learning community. This paper is one of a series of briefings which provide succinct advice on the progress being made in key areas of change, to help inform discussion and promote further, innovative development. This latest addition to the series explores how practitioners are working with young people and their parents and carers to build an accurate, holistic account of each young person's progress and achievement, as it has accrued by the end of S3.

The end of S3 represents an important milestone in every young person's education. By the end of S3 all young people will have completed the Broad General Phase of Curriculum for Excellence. Young people should have produced their own profile, supported by staff, which gives a reliable and full account of their cumulative progress and achievements. It should include a focus on what they feel are their latest and best successes.

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### How is the process managed?

Young people are entitled to support which helps them to understand their progress and achievements. In particular, their relationship with a member of staff who knows them well will enable them to discuss their learning and achievements openly on a regular basis. For some learners, for example, those who may need additional support due to specific needs, this relationship is particularly vital. These discussions will be an important part of the ongoing profiling process and will help to authenticate the profile. In secondary schools, this process may most easily be managed as part of a school's PSE programme or through an established first-line guidance system. The profiling **process** has the potential to promote very positively the way learners understand their own learning, progress and achievement. In developing manageable profiling processes, it is important that the focus remains on improving outcomes for young people. This means giving learners the space to take ownership of their profiling, through **appropriately supported discussions**. Consideration should be given to how parents and carers contribute directly or indirectly to these

discussions. During learning activities, staff discuss regularly with learners their progress and achievements. This helps young people to gain self-awareness and skills and to increase independence. These learner-centred approaches are at the heart of an effective profiling process and support young people in recognising their achievements and gaining insight into the skills they are developing.

Effective **quality assurance** and **moderation** are needed to ensure that the information in the profile is reliable and that it is seen to **validate achievements**. Sometimes this may include externally validated content which will help ensure that the profile is recognised and **valued by all**.

Schools use a variety of **manual** or **electronic information management systems**, most of which have the scope to support aspects of profiling. It will be important to ensure that profiling, whilst drawing in part on the information in these systems, doesn't become driven by them. A **manual profiling process** may make use of personal learning plans, logs or diaries. The learner will record, on a regular basis, comments on their learning and the skills they have developed. They should also be encouraged to record their latest and best achievements. Some schools are developing **e-portfolios** to support profiling. Glow provides a platform for e-portfolios based on blogging as a way of recording achievements, including progress across the curriculum. These approaches are helpful in supporting profiling, particularly so when they complement

**high-quality dialogue** between learners and staff.

An important discussion to be had about each individual S3 profile is to decide how best to capture and reflect learning and achievement in areas that **will not be taken forward** into the senior phase. Regular dialogue between learners and practitioners should help each learner to evaluate their own achievements, and at this key stage to capture latest and best for the profile. Drawing together and synthesising key information will be important here.

### What is the S3 profile?

It is a positive statement of a young person's latest and best achievements. It is drawn from the young person's ongoing dialogue with staff about learning and will be combined with assessment information agreed with the school which depicts progress in aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. As such, the profile can acknowledge and validate a young person's achievements. It is the culmination of an ongoing profiling process which supports learners in developing their awareness and understanding of their own learning and resulting successes.

The process of profiling can be a powerful motivating influence for a young person, encouraging each individual to achieve their best. It can help to give individuals a real sense of personal ownership of their own learning and achievements, promote their understanding of their own skill development and enhance a range of skills, including literacy, and other attributes and capabilities. It

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should build on children's experience of developing a profile at the P7 stage. As the currency of the profiles develops over time, and young people gain a sense of pride in them, it is likely that many will want to continue the process as they move through the senior phase and beyond.

A sub set of the profile will be the S3 report which will provide a summative measure of progress in a subject area; the key difference is that, as part of the S3 profile, a young person will be supported to reflect on their attainment and achievement in curricular areas.

#### Who is the S3 profile for?

As the process of profiling becomes embedded in Scottish education and its status becomes increasingly valued, it is likely that the interested audience will grow. However, it is intended that the profile is primarily there to help each young person develop self-esteem and confidence, and other important attributes, through recognising their own progress and achievements. Young people

themselves, their parents and teachers (present and future) are likely in the first instance to be most interested in the profiles and most closely associated with the profiling process. Profiles, alongside the S3 report, should help inform the Senior Phase pathways.

#### What should be in the profile?

The profile needs to be manageable, straightforward in design, and the process worthwhile in contributing to, and underpinning, learning and achievement. As such we need to take care to ensure that it doesn't become formulaic and predictable, rather it needs to reflect the uniqueness of each individual. This is why profiles should be designed locally and will probably have a consistent format for schools or groups of schools.

A profile will include a learner statement and is likely to include a reliable profile of achievement in literacy and numeracy and information about progress in key aspects of health and wellbeing. As skills in profiling develop, profiles will reflect

achievements across all curriculum areas, perhaps drawing on school arrangements for monitoring and tracking in each area, alongside other personal achievements and include those which stem from learning experiences outwith school. For some, these may include sporting or cultural successes and skills and attributes developed through experiences in the community. For others, it may be other skills, attributes and capabilities as appropriate to the individual, including any where significant gain has taken place.

#### The learner statement

Each young person, with appropriate support through dialogue with a member of staff, and from discussions with their parents as appropriate, will provide a **learner statement** outlining their latest and best achievements, in and out of school. Most young people are likely to need guidance to develop their skills in bringing together the learner statement, although over time the need for this guidance is likely to reduce for many. Just as in personal statements in CVs, information needs to be presented in an attractive and succinct way so that the reader can see clearly the most important areas of progress and achievement, perhaps accompanied by illustrations of recent activities reflecting skills. In particular, by preparing this statement for themselves with appropriate support as necessary, young people have a rich opportunity to display their literacy skills. And by being able to express their own awareness of their skills, attributes and other personal qualities, young people can demonstrate their achievements in important aspects of health and wellbeing.

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### What are the main differences between the S3 profile and a report to parents?

Profile	Written and ongoing reporting to parents
Written by the young person in partnership with the school.	Written by teacher(s)/staff.
At P7 and S3, which are significant points of transition in a learner's education.	At least once per year.
Provides information on successes in learning and a reflective summary statement of achievements, including achievements beyond school and other awards.	Provides clear information and feedback on a learner's progress and how well she/he is doing against agreed expectations.
Provides a way for young people to explain and share their achievements with a range of people, including parents, teachers and, at future dates, ongoing education staff and prospective employers.	Provides an agenda for discussion between learners and those teaching and supporting them.
The learner has ownership of the profile and it contains the information that they choose to share with others.	Informs parents of what their child needs to do to improve and suggests how parents might help.
Contributes directly to the learning process by giving each learner an important context for applying their skills, including literacy.	Young people do not usually provide content directly for the report.

### How can we take forward our S3 profiling approaches?

The potential benefits for learners who participate fully in well-conceived profiling approaches are becoming recognised. As you explore these benefits with learners, you may find it helpful to consider together with colleagues the following points.

- How well do we help learners to recognise their own achievements?
- Do our S3 profiles have the capacity to reflect each individual's unique and full range of achievements?

- Do we have a clear strategy in place to develop our profiling over time to reflect the principles in BtC5?<sup>1</sup>
- In what ways will the contents of the S3 profile and the parental report be complementary?
- Does each learner take responsibility for, and feel ownership of, her/his individual profile?
- Do we recognise the needs of different groups of learners so that every individual is supported and guided to make the process a success and portray themselves well?
- Is the process of profiling having a positive impact on young people's self-esteem and confidence, and contributing directly to their learning in a range of skills, attributes and capabilities?
- Do our profiling processes and profiles have the flexibility to recognise that children and young people learn and progress in different ways and at different rates?
- Are our profiling processes and profiles useful in the present and potentially so in the future?
- Have we helped parents understand the purpose and process of S3 profiles?

<sup>1</sup> Building the Curriculum 5 (BtC5) is available at [www.educationscotland.gov.uk](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk)

The CfE Briefings is a new series designed to provide practitioners with information and advice to support their implementation of CfE.

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