SPICe Briefing
Curriculum for Excellence

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The Curriculum for Excellence is due to be implemented from August 2010 with new qualifications starting in 2012/13 and 2013/14. This paper provides an overview of the new curriculum, changes to assessment and qualifications and outlines some of the debate surrounding these changes.

SPICe Briefings 08/08 and 07/18 give information on the curriculum which will be replaced.

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Curriculum for Excellence will reform education from 3 to 18 years and is due to be implemented in Scottish schools in August 2010. It is intended to provide a general education up to S3, followed by a senior phase when qualifications will be taken. National guidance is less prescriptive than in the current curriculum. There is also an emphasis on inter-disciplinary learning and personalisation. New exams are due to be introduced in 2012/13 and in 2013/14 and existing exams will be revised to fit in with the new curriculum. The Scottish Government has provided £17.8m to fund implementation. This includes £4m to second 100 teachers from the classroom to work on the curriculum and provision of 3 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) days. Further (as yet unquantified) resources for local government were proposed in January 2010, including a fourth extra day of CPD.

The reform stems from a national debate on education in 2002 with key developments since then being:

- 2004: Review group's proposals are published and accepted by Ministers.

- 2006: Proposals for the new curriculum published, setting out 'four capacities' of: successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

- 2006 – 10: 'Building the Curriculum' guidance series covers curricular areas and the four capacities, early years, curriculum design, skills and, in January 2010, assessment.

- April 2009: Experiences and Outcomes published following a 'process of engagement' on the drafts from September 2007. These are the standards and expectations from pre-school to S3.

- June 2009: Following consultation, the new qualifications were announced. These are:

  o a qualification in literacy and numeracy, to be taken in S3 or later. These will be introduced from school year 2012/13. Pupils will be assessed across the range of subjects, therefore all teachers will assess for these skills.

  o Standard grade and intermediate 1 and 2 will be replaced by 'National 4' and 'National 5'. These will be introduced from school year 2013/14.

  o other National Qualifications will be revised to ensure they fit with the new curriculum.

There has been extensive comment about the new curriculum. The main concerns raised are that the guidance is vague and that there is a lack of time, funding and training to implement the reforms successfully.

BACKGROUND

There is almost no statutory curriculum in Scotland. The exceptions are that Gaelic must be taught in Gaelic-speaking areas (Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (c44) (s1(5) (a) iii) and religious instruction is normally expected to be provided (Education (Scotland) Act 1980 s8(i)).   In addition, SSI 2000/443 sets out five statutory national priorities for education which are: achievement and attainment (particularly in literacy and numeracy), framework for learning, inclusion and equality, values and citizenship and learning for life.

Delivery of the curriculum is the responsibility of education authorities and individual schools under guidance from the Scottish Government and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). Education authorities are expected to issue clear policy statements to individual schools on how the curriculum is to be delivered. Head teachers are responsible for the day to day implementation, management and organisation of the curriculum.

The previous Scottish Executive set up a "National Debate on Education" in 2002 to develop its long term education policy. Following concerns expressed in the debate about the structure and operation of the curriculum, the Executive instigated a review of the 3-18 curriculum in 2003. The review group's report, "A Curriculum for Excellence" (Scottish Executive 2004a) set out the aims of education and the principles that should underpin the modern curriculum. In response, the Scottish Executive set out a programme for development to be implemented from August 2010.

Publications on the new curriculum are available on the Learning and Teaching Scotland website at: http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/index.asp

THE 3-18 CURRICULUM REVIEW

Responses to the 2002 "National Debate on Education" highlighted some areas for improvement in relation to the curriculum. In particular they suggested the need to:

- reduce overcrowding in the curriculum
- make learning more active, challenging and enjoyable
- make better connections between the stages in the curriculum from 3 to 18
- achieve a better balance between "academic" and "vocational" subjects
- broaden the range of learning experiences for young people
- equip young people with core skills
- make sure that approaches to assessment and certification support learning
- offer more choices to meet the needs of individual young people

In response, a curriculum review group was established in November 2003 to identify the purposes of education and determine the key principles for curriculum design. The group's proposals were published in 2004 (Scottish Executive 2004a) and were fully accepted by Ministers (Scottish Executive, 2004b).

DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS

The Curriculum for Excellence aims to focus classroom practice upon the child and around the four capacities of education which provide opportunities for children and young people to develop as: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors.

These four capacities reflect many of the concepts in the existing curriculum but Curriculum for Excellence sets them out more explicitly. They are also picked up in one of the Government's 15 national outcomes which is that: "our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens".[1]

The curriculum review group also established clear principles for curriculum design. Four are new: challenge and enjoyment, depth, personalisation and choice, and relevance. Three are the same as the existing principles: breadth, progression and coherence. There are two existing principles which are not repeated. These are balance and continuity.

Progress and Proposals (Scottish Executive 2006a) set out the key features of the new curriculum which are:

- the whole school has responsibility for developing the four capacities in every child and young person
- at all stages from the early years to S6 the curriculum will include learning through:
    - the ethos and life of the school as a community
    - curriculum areas and subjects
    - interdisciplinary projects and studies
    - opportunities for personal achievement
- schools will be given greater scope in designing their own curriculum which should provide opportunities for broader achievements, interdisciplinary activities and personal choices
- there is more emphasis on active learning[2] – particularly in the early primary stages
- greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy with all teachers having responsibility for promoting language and literacy development.
- broad curricular areas will remain but there will be greater emphasis on interdisciplinary learning

This was followed by five sets of guidance published between 2006 and 2010 in the series 'Building the Curriculum' (BTC). BTC1 (Scottish Executive, 2006b) explains how the different curriculum areas contribute to developing the four capacities. BTC2 (Scottish Executive 2007) covered active learning in the early years. BTC 3 (Scottish Government, 2008a) replaces previous guidance on curriculum design setting out that all children and young people are entitled to experience:

- a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18
- a broad general education, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas. This should include understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it and understanding of the environment
- a senior phase which provides opportunities for study for qualifications and other planned opportunitites for developing the four capacities
- opportunites for developing skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work (with a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and well-being)
- opportunities for pupils to achieve to the highest levels they can through appropriate personal support and challenge
- opportunities to move into positive and sustained destinations beyond school

BTC4 (Scottish Government, 2009a) looked at skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. This explained how Curriculum for Excellence seeks to get away from considering skills as

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[1] The 15 national outcomes sit with five strategic objectives and a number of national indicators to form the national performance framework agreed with COSLA (Scottish Government, 2007a).
[2] That is, pupils are actively engaged in the learning process and take more responsibility for their own learning rather than sitting "passively" having information presented to them. For further discussion see LTS online

either 'vocational' or 'academic.' It sought to show how key skills contribute to the whole range of knowledge, skills and attributes and that they should be embedded across all curricular areas. Particular skills often mentioned in the documentation are literacy, numeracy and skills for health and well-being. BTC4 also references the Skills Strategy (Scottish Government 2007b) which includes the following five 'core skills' of communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology and working with others. BTC5 (Scottish Government, 2010) provides guidance on how teachers and local authorities are to develop their approach to assessment (see below p.10).

The content of the curriculum is to be designed with reference to the 'Building the Curriculum' guidance and statements of 'experiences and outcomes' in different curricular areas (see below p.9). Assessment is based on the principles developed through the 'Assessment is for Learning' programme and qualifications are being replaced or revised to reflect the new curriculum (see below p.13).

IMPLEMENTATION

The Management Board has overall management of Curriculum for Excellence and membership is listed at annex 1. There is also an implementation partnership convened by ADES. £17.8m has been provided by the Scottish Government to fund implementation (BBC, 2009). This includes £4m for 100 teachers to be seconded to work on the Curriculum for Excellence and provision of 3 extra CPD days. In January 2010, the Cabinet Secretary stated that further resources would be made available to local authorities (possibly over a number of years), including a fourth CPD day this summer (Russell, M. 2010). He has indicated that: "everyone would have to agree that the money has to be spent on this – it won't be offered otherwise" (TESS, 2010a).

There was an extensive engagement process over the draft experiences and outcomes (see below p.9) and there will be a further survey of teachers' views this year (TESS 2010a). In addition, the months leading up to the start of implementation in August 2010 will see:

- events and engagement on assessment following the publication of Building the Curriculum 5
- publication of exemplification material covering: early years, literacy, numeracy, health and well-being, interdisciplinary learning in secondary, moderation and the senior phase
- publications of
    - research on recognising achievement (February)
    - Policy and Practice framework for 16+ Learning Choices (April)
    - Strategy for Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (June)

(Russell, M. 2010)

The table below outlines the key developments since 2003 and the planned dates for implementation for the new curriculum and qualifications. Implementaton starts in August 2010. The new qualifications will be introduced in schools in 2012/13 and 2013/14. The final certification of qualifications at Standard Grade will be in 2013 and final certification of Intermediate will be in 2015.

Table 1: Development of A Curriculum for Excellence

Date	Development
2003	Curriculum Review Group is established
2004	The Review Group publish *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive 2004a) It sets out proposed aims for education and principles of the curriculum *A Curriculum for Excellence: Ministerial Response* (Scottish Executive 2004b) is published and Ministers establish a Programme Board.
2005	Groups established to review existing guidance.
2006	*Progress and Proposals* (Scottish Executive 2006a) made more detailed proposals. *Building the Curriculum 1* published (Scottish Executive 2006b)
2007	*Building the Curriculum 2* Active Learning in the Early Years (Scottish Executive, 2007) September: Draft experiences and outcomes start to be published
2008	Continuing release of and engagement on draft experiences and outcomes including trialling them in a range of schools. Consultation on qualifications on the next generation of national qualifications between June and October (Scottish Government, 2008b) *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* published. This replaces the existing guidance on the 3-5 curriculum, 5-14 curriculum and curriculum design in the secondary sector
2009	April: Publication of full experiences and outcomes June: Announcement of new qualifications framework September: Assessment in Curriculum for Excellence: *Strategic vision, key principles*, (Scottish Government, 2009c) *Building the Curriculum 4: skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life*
2010	January: *Building the Curriclum 5 - Assessment Framework* (Scottish Government, 2010) Availability of assessment exemplars prior to launch of national assessment resource **August: Schools begin to deliver Curriculum for Excellence** **August: Certification of first Scottish Baccalaureates** **Autumn term: national assessment resource available**
2011	April: planned publication of specifications for new National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications
2012	April; planned publication of unit and course specifications for new and revised qualifications at SCQF levels 2-6 (including National 4 and National 5).
2013	April: planned publication of unit and course specifications for revised qualifications at SCQF level 7 (Advanced Higher) August: final certification of qualifications at Standard Grade SCQF levels 3 to 5) and current Access 2 and 3 (SCQF levels 2 and 3) **August: first certification of new National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications** at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5.
2014	**August: first certification of new/revised qualifications** at SCQF levels 2 to 5 including the National 4 and National 5.
2015	August: Final certification of qualifications at Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF levels 4 and 5). **August: First certification of revised qualifications at Higher** (SCQF level 6) August: Final certification of current versions of qualifications at Higher (SCQF level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF level 7)
2016	**August: first certification of revised qualifications at Advanced Higher.**

Source: Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009a. Russell, M. 2010, Scottish Government on-line.

PROGRESSION AND THE LEVELS OF THE CURRICULUM

The Curriculum for Excellence provides a broad general education to the end of S3, followed by a 'senior phase'. The general education is divided into five levels from 'early' to 'fourth' and learners will progress though the levels at different rates. Table 2 below, relates the curricular levels to stages of education.

Table 2: Curriculum levels and stage of education

Level	Experiences and outcomes for most children and young people
early	in pre-school and primary 1
first	by the end of P4 but earlier for some
second	by the end of P7, but earlier for some
third	in S1 to S3, but earlier for some. Fourth level broadly equates to SCQF level 4
fourth	

([Learning and Teaching Scotland, online](#))

The third level is to be considered a minimum entitlement for all young people.

> "it is our ambition that all young people will be secure in their learning though to third level outcomes in all curiculuar areas by the end of S3 and some young people up to fourth level in some curricular areas." (Scottish Government, 2009b).

Schools will be able to provide a range of 'progression pathways.' That is, pupils should be able to progress through the curriculum in different ways. In order to progress within a level, "learners should be able to demonstrate confidence, proficiency and security" in their breadth of learning, in tackling challenging material and in applying learning to new contexts.

The fourth level draft experiences and outcomes (see below) are written to equip a young person to achieve a qualification at SCQF level 4. It is not therefore limited to a particular year of school. At the end of S3, pupils will have an 'S3 profile' recognising their progress across the curriculum (Scottish Government, 2010).

The Senior Phase

The senior phase runs from S4 to S6 where a young person can take a qualification at whatever level is appropriate to that individual. Young people can also complete the senior phase in college or through work based training. Work in the 'senior phase' can be at any level of the curriculum and can also include qualifications such as national 4, national 5, Higher, advanced higher and baccalaureate. As mentioned above, the 'fourth level' of the experiences and outcomes relate to SCQF level 4, but other than that there is no explicit mapping of SCQF levels or qualifications to levels of the curriculum. When pupils move into S4, most will be expected to start work at SCQF levels 4 or 5 (national 4 and 5 qualifications), although some might be ready to start at SCQF 6 (Higher). The qualifications available through the senior phase are outlined below at p.13.

EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES

For education up to S3, the standards against which performance is measured have been developed in terms of statements about experiences and outcomes that pupils will have achieved (Scottish Government, 2010). Draft experiences and outcomes covering the curriculum from age 3 to 15 were subject to an engagement process between November 2007 and December 2008 and the finalised versions were published in April 2009. They cover the following areas:

1. Numeracy and Mathematics
2. Sciences
3. Expressive Arts
4. Social studies
5. Languages
6. Religious and moral education
7. Technologies
8. Health and Wellbeing

In addition, the following three areas are to be taught across the whole curriculum, with an emphasis on inter-disciplinary study:

9. Health and Wellbeing across learning
10. Literacy across learning
11. Numeracy across learning

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The table below uses experiences and outcomes in reading to illustrate the levels from 'early' to 'fourth'.

Table 3: Experiences and outcomes for literacy; tools for reading

Level	Experience and outcome
Early	I explore sounds, letters and words, discovering how they work together, and I can use what I learn to help me as I read and write
First	I am learning to select and use strategies and resources before I read, and as I read, to help make the meaning of texts clear
Second	I can select and use a range of strategies and resources before I read, and as I read, to make meaning clear and give reasons for my selection
Third	I can select and use the strategies and resources I find most useful before I read, and as I read, to monitor and check my understanding
Fourth	Before and as I read, I can apply strategies and use resources independently to help me read a wide variety of texts and/or find the information I need

(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009b)

Engagement with teachers, parents and employers during the development of these materials included:

- an on-line questionnaire
- focus groups with parents, employers and others
- events for local authority staff to discuss how the draft experiences and outcomes can be translated into classroom practice
- trying out different draft experiences and outcomes in schools. This involved trying out one or two curriculum areas in a few schools in each local authority.

This engagement process discovered a wide range of views concerning the development of a *Curriculum for Excellence*. Key themes included:

- teachers generally welcomed a move away from a prescriptive approach, but there was concern that the drafts were vague
- concerns about how to achieve consistency in interpretation of standards
- the need to develop robust systems to monitor standards
- the challenge of providing enough support without constraining professional responsibility
- the need to "weave together different policy threads to present a coherent narrative for the profession"
- support for emphasising the connections across the curriculum, promoting active learning, collaborative work and critical thinking
- support for more collaborative work between education in school, college and other settings

The report concluded that:

> "Teachers will be at the centre of the process and so must be provided with the professional development support that will give them confidence in taking increased responsibility. This support will need to be provided at local and national levels and by providers of teacher education. Leadership in curriculum development becomes a responsibility for all and it is very important that discussions and debate continue as part of the process of continuing development of the curriculum (Glasgow University, 2009).

ASSESSMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS

Most qualifications will be taken during the 'senior phase'. That is, S4-S6, college or work based learning. However, assessment will be undertaken in all year groups. The approach to assessment is based on the 'Assessment is for Learning' programme[3].

ASSESSMENT

What is assessed

Pupils will be assessed against the 'experiences and outcomes' discussed above and standards for particular qualifications. 'Principles for Practice' documents have been developed which outline key features for assessment in different curriculum areas. See the Experiences and Outcomes web site at: http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/index.asp Broader achievements, such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards should also be recognised as contributing to pupils' progress as part of the S3 profile. Further guidance on the S3 profile will be published in due course. Rather than assessing only whether minimum standards have been achieved, Curriculum for Excellence requires assessment for breadth, depth and application of learning. That is: how well pupils have achieved, how they have responded to challenging material and how they apply learning to new situations. Progress in terms of the four capacities will also be considered, in order to discuss 'overall development.' (Scottish Government, 2010).

Method

Assessment should use evidence from day to day learning as well as tests and examinations. Some local authorities may decide to continue to use standardised tests but the Curriculum for Excellence approach is firmly based on the principles of Assessment is for Learning. This

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[3] This programme was launched in 2002 and aims to support teachers to improve their assessment practice. It is based on distinguishing assessment for learning, as learning and of learning. See: http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/about/aboutaifl.asp

emphasises the importance of achieving the appropriate balance between using assessment to sum up attainment (summative assessment) and to develop learning (formative assessment). It is recommended that schools 'avoid narrowing the curriculum' which could result from 'teaching to the test' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009c).

Staff should discuss with pupils what they are expected to learn and engage them by using self and peer assessment. Pupils should agree learning goals and record them, for example in diaries, learning logs and progress files. Assessment is part of day to day learning and is also conducted from time to time to take stock of progress. Curriculum for Excellence emphasises the need to assess at points of transition and the need to work across sectors to develop this successfully. In particular pupils will have a profile of achievement at the end of S3 which will include a summary of progress through the curriculum levels and progress towards any qualifications.[4] Further guidance is due to be published on this (Scottish Government, 2010).

Quality Assurance

Assessment in Curriculum for Excellence will primarily be through teacher judgements and through national qualifications (see below p.12 for qualifications). Consistency will be achieved by developing a process of moderation. That is: "the range of approaches used for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations. This involves teachers working together, drawing on guidance and exemplifications" (Scottish Government, 2010). In particular it involves:

- development of a National Assessment Resource
- participation in networks
- participation in a range of CPD activity
- feedback on teacher judgements

The National Assessment Resource will be launched in Autumn 2010. It will contain exemplification material initially provided mainly by LTS and SQA and adapting existing National Assessment Bank material which is Curriculum for Excellence compliant. Over time, it is expected that teachers themselves will contribute material. In addition, teachers will be able to use GLOW (the school's intranet) as a forum for discussion about standards and assessment. Initially, the focus will be on literacy, numeracy, health and well-being. Some of these materials will be made available on the LTS website ahead of the launch date.

CPD will support teachers' use of assessment and Local Authorities are expected to have a CPD plan in place to support Curriculum for Excellence implementation. As noted above, the Government has funded 4 extra CPD days to supplement teachers' annual 35 hours of CPD time and 5 in-service days. At a national level, support will be provided through GLOW, SQA Academy[5] and network groups.

In addition to developing consistency through moderation, quality assurance will also be developed through:

- HMIe inspections
- a revised Scottish Survey of Achievement, staring with numeracy in 2011
- SQA attainment analysis, showing results by local authority

At an individual level, pupils' progress in achieving the Curriculum for Excellence levels will be reported to parents. BTC5 states that reports: "should note particular strengths, areas for

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[4] Although most qualifications are taken in the senior phase, pupils might take skills for work, literacy and numeracy in S3.
[5] This enables access to a variety of courses related to assessment. See SQA Academy website.

development and achievements in challenging aspects and in the application of learning." Further guidance is due to be produced on reporting (Scottish Government, 2010).

At a local authority level, schools will use the quality assurance and moderation processes to benchmark their performance (i.e. measure performance against others with similar characteristics).

At a national level, progress will be reported using the Scottish Survey of Achievement, international surveys (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA[6]) and SQA results at local authority level. The Government will not collate or publish aggregate information of performance by individual schools (Scottish Government, 2010).

QUALIFICATIONS

The table below summarises the main school and college qualifications available, highlighting the new qualifications introduced through Curriculum for Excellence. The key new elements will be:

- from school year 2012/13, new National Literacy and National Numeracy qualifications.

- from school year 2013/14, a new national qualification at two levels – National 4, which will replace Intermediate 1 and Standard Grade 'General' and National 5 which will replace Intermediate 2 and Standard Grade 'Credit'.

- revision and updating of existing National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher. Revised Access 3 will replace Standard Grade 'Foundation.' The revised Access courses will be introduced in 2013/14, the new Highers in 2014/15 and the new Advanced Highers in 2015/16.

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[6] PISA is run by the OECD and tests science literacy in 15 year olds, TIMSS and PIRLS are run by the IEA and test maths and reading in 9 and 11 year olds.

Table 4: Qualifications in a Curriculum for Excellence

Qualification	SCQF level[7]	Where and when normally studied	Assessment	Date to start
National Units	1 to 7	S4-S6 or college. Possibly also S3.	40 hours of teaching. Building blocks of many other qualifications. Internal assessment	current
Access 1	1	S4-S6	Internal assessment	current
Access 2	2	S4-S6	Internal assessment	current
Access 3 (revised)	3	S4-S6	Internal assessment	2013/14
National Literacy & National Numeracy	3 to 5	S3 – S6	Portfolio of work across subjects Some external assessment	In schools 2012/13. 1st certification Aug 2013
Skills for Work	3 to 6 (mostly 4 & 5)	S3-S4, college and workplace	Internal assessment.	current
National 4	4	S4-S6	internal assessment, not graded	In schools 2013/14. 1st certification Aug 2014
National 5	5	S4-S6	some external assessment, graded	As above
Higher (revised)	6	S4-S6, normally S5	graded A to D, some external assessment	In schools 2014/15. 1st certification Aug 2015
Advanced Higher (revised)	7	S4-S6, normally S6	graded A to D, some external assessment	In schools 2015/16. 1st certification Aug 2016
Baccalaureate in languages or science	Elements at 6&7	S5-S6	combines courses in Higher and Advanced Higher with interdisciplinary project, awarded at pass and distinction	1st certification Aug 2010
National Qualification group awards: (national certificate and national progression awards)	2 to 7	mainly college	focused on occupational area, internal assessment, not graded	current
Higher National Units	5 to 9	college	internal assessment	current
Modern Apprenticeships	2 or above	workplace	workplace based, might include SVQ or HN qualifications	current
SVQ	4 to 11	college and workplace		
HNC	7	college		current
HND	8	college		current

(SQA online, Scottish Government, personal communication).

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[7] The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework aligns qualifications to levels from 1 to 12 to enable easier comparison. See: SCQF website.

ISSUES RAISED

As the implementation date approaches there has been increasing media comment about the Curriculum for Excellence. Concerns expressed include: the guidance is too vague, the need for more CPD, concerns about assessment and the place of specific subjects. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) have supported the principles of the reform – in particular the focus on formative assessment rather than 'national tests', but have frequently raised concerns about resources of time and money for implementation.

The Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA) conference in May 2009 voted for a delay of a year, and they are concerned that a 'two tier' system is emerging because 'National 4' will not be externally assessed. Individuals in School Leaders Scotland (SLS) have made strong criticisms of the assessment proposals (see below). Other frequent commentators are Keir Bloomer (who was on the original curriculum review group) and Lyndsay Paterson (Professor of Educational Policy at Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh University). Professor Paterson has criticised the curriculum materials as vague, with not enough emphasis on basic skills of literacy and numeracy whereas Keir Bloomer has warned that the reform might be retreating from an originally more radical vision. Others, such as David Cameron (former president of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland) and Graham Donaldson (retiring Senior Chief Inspector at HMIe) are more positive, emphasising continuity in that Curriculum for Excellence builds on previous reforms such as Assessment is for Learning. The following focuses on the arguments made over the last year around prescription and assessment before highlighting how the Government has made changes in response.

The move away from prescription

A fundamental concept underlying Curriculum for Excellence is to allow teachers more professional autonomy to develop the curriculum. This is very different to the approach in England for example, where the national curriculum is much more prescriptive. Although the current 5-14 guidelines are not as prescriptive as the English system, Curriculum for Excellence moves even further away from this.

The engagement process on the draft experiences and outcomes sought the views of teachers, local authority officers and others. While many teachers welcomed the recognition of professional autonomy, they also saw a paradox between this and the pressure they feel to focus on exam attainment and HMIe inspection:

> "its key strength is also its key weakness" (Principal teacher, secondary) (Glasgow University, 2009)

Teachers were concerned that developing their own approaches might risk them being criticised in the inspection process or might jeopardise attainment in exams because they don't 'get through the syllabus':

> "Everything we do is measured all the time […] I worry that initially people will go off and do their own thing and we'll end up with a hundred versions and then you're surprised when somebody comes in and says that's not really what we meant." (Primary head teacher) (Glasgow University, 2009)

Keir Bloomer has described the experiences and outcomes as "an attempt – albeit flawed – to do something difficult but worthwhile. They seek to define the curriculum in a way that is purposeful, permissive rather than prescriptive and concerned with achievement more than content." (Times Educational Supplement Scotland, 2009a).

At a head teachers' conference in March 2009, there were worries that it wasn't clear what to teach in S1-3 until there was more detail about qualifications in S4-6. (Since then, the basic structure for qualifications was announced in June, key principles for assessment were published in September and the framework for assessment was published in January 2010).

In October 2009, the Times Educational Supplement Scotland (TESS, 2009b) asked eight members of the original review group to reflect on the five years of development. They were all still generally very supportive, with key positive aspects being:

- the greater involvement of colleges (Graham Hyslop)
- literacy, health and well-being being the responsibility of all (George McBride)
- resistance to call for more explicit guidelines (Keir Bloomer)
- support for formative assessment (Keir Bloomer)

However, some concerns were:

- that it was moving too far away from prescription (Iain McMillan, Judith Gillespie)
- more CPD is needed (Graham Hyslop)
- parents and employers aren't aware of or have little understanding of the reforms (Keir Bloomer, Linda Kinney)

Since then, the Cabinet Secretary announced in January 2010 the provision of an additional in-service day for the summer term of 2009-10. Also, on 27 January 2010 a Curriculum for Excellence parental toolkit was launched to help teachers to explain the curriculum to parents.

While there are some concerns that reforms are too radical a departure from prescription (eg Judith Gillespie), Keir Bloomer has argued that this is fundamental to delivering the intended 'transformational change.' However, he also considers that achieving this more radical change needs a clearer strategic framework:

"Such comprehensive transformation requires careful structuring of change and long-term vision - areas where the programme is weak. Viewed as the template for fully implementing the new curriculum, the programme is a failure. Viewed as a fairly cautious first stage, it has shortcomings - but also promise. What it needs is strong organising principles to give it coherence, and a restored sense of vision to give it purpose. If ACfE is no more than a random collection of ideas for incremental change, it will bring modest improvements, but be no more transformational than Standard Grade development or 5-14." (TESS, 2009a).

In addition to concerns about 'vagueness', there have been concerns about the place of specific subject disciplines and of the summative assessment of formal tests. In a lecture in March 2009, Lyndsay Paterson criticised the 'child centred' approach of the Curriculum for Excellence. He suggested that there was a need to ensure sound subject knowledge amongst primary teachers and that sustaining interest comes from 'the fascination of solving problems.' He considered that while obsession with exam results does not lead to sound learning – comparing one's learning with others can be motivating. In addition, learning needs to be embedded in a discipline 'with all its norms and values giving a framework of understanding' (TESS, 2009c).

Brian Boyd (University of Strathclyde) has argued for a more positive view, emphasising the crucial role of CPD for achieving successful implementation:

"ACfE is not about "dumbing down"; nor is it a threat to disciplines. The dichotomy of disciplines and inter-disciplinary studies is wholly false […] ACfE offers teachers a chance to become re-professionalised, to rediscover their creativity and to use their skills in the pursuit of understanding for all. The tyranny of exams, the fragmentation of the curriculum,

excessive focus on timetabling and putting pupils into ability sets have combined to make young people's experience in many of our schools tame and limited.

The traditional model of curriculum reform in Scotland, where there is tight prescription from the centre in terms of content and exams but a loose, decentralised approach to continuing professional development, needs to be reversed. We need more opportunity for diversity and creativity, and a greater emphasis on high-quality CPD for all teachers. We can build on our strengths, promote deep learning through disciplines and interdisciplinary studies, and create an assessment and qualifications system which serves the needs of learners - if we have the courage to do so" (TESS, 2009d).

Assessment

One of the aims of the reforms is to reduce assessment and ensure that exams don't lead the curriculum. Throughout the development process there have been frequent calls for more information about arrangements for assessment. As mentioned above, the broad outlines for qualifications were announced in June 2009, key principles for assessment in September and a framework for assessment in January 2010. This timeframe should be borne in mind when considering the following comments.

In a speech to the School Leaders Scotland Conference in November 2009, Carole Ford (then president of the SLS) made some strong criticisms of the arrangements for assessment. Her view was that the Curriculum for Excellence would not reduce the time spent on assessment:

> "the combination of unit assessments and coursework in every subject, plus the examination at level 5, will in no way reduce the assessment burden."

She was concerned that the reforms would mean that there was no formal measure of literacy and numeracy until a pupil is in S3 and was also critical of the assessment of literacy and numeracy through building a portfolio of work from across different subjects. (N.B although there is no externally marked assessment, teacher assessment is expected to be undertaken throughout education. (See above p.10). In addition, while she welcomed the elimination of an external exam at National 4, the SSTA have criticised this as they are concerned that this will reduce the status of National 4 in the eyes of employers.

There have been positive responses. For example, David Cameron (previously head of ADES) (TESS, 2009e) reflected on the "queue of people condemning the lack of detail", drawing attention to the fact that the approach builds on the Assessment is for Learning programme and existing guidance on assessment in 5-14: "this is no sea change in assessment". His view was that the experiences and outcomes had been changed following consultation and they should now be 'owned' by the profession and provide a sound basis for assessment. He stressed the central role of moderation, supported by the new National Assessment Resource, which should improve reliability and consistency in teachers' judgements.

Graham Donaldson (TESS, 2009f) reassured teachers that the experiences and outcomes did support assessment.

> "If we get Levels 3 and 4 right, the qualifications will flow from that […] the outcomes and experiences provide the reference point that most of us are looking for."

In November 2009, HMIe published an overview of CPD's contribution to the Curriculum for Excellence:

> "*Curriculum for Excellence* sets a rightly-ambitious agenda for reform in Scottish education. While Scottish teachers have highly-developed professional skills, the

success of the reform will depend upon teachers developing new knowledge, understanding and practice. Particularly in an environment where resources are restricted, it will be important to use available time and resources to maximum effect to achieve this."

[…]

"Our work has shown that high quality professional development, collegiality and the work of chartered teachers are helping many schools in their work towards implementing *Curriculum for Excellence* and that this is already leading to more motivating experiences for learners. We have found a great deal of encouraging practice, but this is not in evidence consistently across all schools and education authorities, and not all parts of the agenda are yet being systematically addressed. Most importantly, there is not yet a clear enough link between these activities and improvements in children and young people's learning."

Following the publication of Building the Curriculum 5 Larry Flanagan (EIS) said: "In these times of reduced budgets, falling teacher numbers and rising class sizes, the Scottish Government and local authorities must deliver significant additional funding if schools are to make a success of such an ambitious programme of curricular improvement."   Ken Cunningham (SLS) said questions remained about how to measure literacy, how the curriculum levels would work in practice and how external moderation would work in the context of tight staffing (TES, 2010).

Changes made

The Government has made some changes to the programme in reaction to the debate. In particular:

- in November 2008, the implementation date was delayed by year to August 2010.
- in December 2008, the literacy and numeracy tests that were to have been taken from S4 were moved to S3. This was in response to criticisms that it was necessary to allow pupils to resubmit work.
- changes were made to the draft experiences and outcomes following the engagement process. There were substantial changes made to those for science.
- concerns about CPD and resources for implementation led to the provision of £4m for 100 teachers to work on the Curriculum for Excellence and 3 extra in-service days between 2008 and 2009. A further extra day was announced January 2010. In addition, in the forward to Building the Curriculum 5, the Cabinet Secretary stated that:

    "I recognise that this approach will require significant activity at local authority and school level. I have asked the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board to give me advice on the additional activity that will be required. That will enable me to ensure that the necessary resources are made available."

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ANNEX 1: CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Marie Allan, Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)
- Janet Brown, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- Vivienne Brown, Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
- Terry Lanagan, ADES
- Alison Coull, Scottish Government
- Graham Donaldson, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE)
- Larry Flanagan, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
- Tony Finn, General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS)
- Graham Hyslop, Scotland's Colleges
- John Ireland, Scottish Government
- Prof Grant Jarvie, Universities Scotland
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- Colin MacLean, Scottish Government (Chair)
- Irene Matier, Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland (AHDS)
- Forbes Mitchell, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE)
- Bernard McLeary, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS)
- Jackie Brock, Scottish Government
- Myra Pearson, Deans of Education Faculties/Departments
- Christine Pollock, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Ronnie Summers, School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
- Duncan Simpson, Community Learning and Development
- Judith Sischy, SCIS Scottish Council of Independent Schools

ANNEX 2: CURRICULUM REVIEW GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- Philip Rycroft, SEED
- Jim Anderson, Director of Education, Angus Council
- Mike Baughan, Chief Executive, Learning and Teaching Scotland
- Keir Bloomer, Chief Executive, Clackmannanshire Council
- Jean Campbell, Headteacher, Glendale Primary School, Glasgow
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- Bernard McLeary, Chief Executive, Learning and Teaching Scotland
- Iain McMillan, Director, CBI Scotland
- Wilma Miller, School Board Chair, Dumfries High School
- Pamela Munn, Head of the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh
- Dick Staite, Headteacher, Beeslack Community High School, Penicuik
- Gill Robinson, SEED

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