THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM – PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

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This briefing provides an overview of the school curriculum in Scotland. It also provides details of the on-going review of the curriculum. It updates SPICe briefing 07/18 published in April 2007.

The Scottish Parliament

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KEY POINTS

- In general, there is no statutory curriculum in Scotland, although national guidance sets a recommended framework. Delivery of the curriculum is the responsibility of education authorities and individual schools, taking into account national guidance.

- The current curriculum is structured into three distinct stages: early years covering the ages 3-5; primary and S1 and S2 under the 5-14 framework; and the later stages of secondary from S3 onwards.

- The principles of balance, breadth, continuity and progression underlie the current curriculum.

- National guidance recommends broad curricular areas and time allocations for each area. Schools have been encouraged to make use of the flexibility that exists within the system. Guidelines also contain detailed advice about the content of individual subject areas.

- The broad curricular areas in S1 and S2 remain as key elements in the planning of the S3-S4 and S5-S6 curriculum although individual pupils in these years have a greater freedom of choice in the subjects they study.

- Following the outcome of the national debate on education, the Scottish Executive set up a group in 2003 to review the 3-18 curriculum. A key theme arising from the debate was the need to "de-clutter" the curriculum and introduce greater flexibility within schools.

- The review group's report, "Curriculum for Excellence" set out the aims for education in Scotland and the underlying principles of the curriculum. Work is on-going to translate these principles into practice.

- The new Scottish Government has made clear that it is committed to continuing the development of a Curriculum for Excellence.

- The intention is to introduce flexibility to the traditional subject-based curriculum by giving schools and teachers more scope to be innovative. Guidance will be streamlined and will focus more on the experiences pupils should have and the outcomes they should achieve. There will also be a greater emphasis on teaching across and beyond traditional curriculum areas.

- It is anticipated that the revised framework will be implemented from 2009/10.

- Key issues surrounding the on-going review include the role of individual subjects in the revised framework and the level of detailed content within subjects, implementation of the new framework and the link with the assessment and certification system.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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)).

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 underline the modern curriculum. In response, the Scottish Executive set out a programme for development with a view to beginning implementation in 2009/10.

The new Scottish Government has continued the general approach outlined in the Curriculum for Excellence. In a recent debate the Minister for Schools and Skills, Maureen Watt MSP said:

> "There must be a coherent curriculum from 3 to 18; a focus on outcomes; more vocational opportunities; a focus on literacy and numeracy at every stage; appropriate stretching and pacing for every child; and teachers working together to make coherent sense of what each child is being taught. The Government is fully committed to the Curriculum for Excellence programme as a means of achieving those aims." (Scottish Parliament, 2008)

This paper considers the current framework, the curriculum review process and some issues around the potential changes, in particular the role of vocational education.

EXISTING CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The current curriculum structure is broadly split into three areas: early years covering ages 3-5; the 5-14 phase from primary to S2; and from S3 onwards. Each of these broad areas has been subject to review and reform at different times over the years. SPICe briefing 04-01 'The School Curriculum' (Berry 2004) provides further information on the historical development of the curriculum.

EARLY EDUCATION

Since 1 April 2002 local authorities have had the duty to secure free, part-time, pre-school education for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish it. The aims of pre-school education as set out in the "Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5" (Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) (1999a) are:

- to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can feel happy and secure
- to encourage the emotional, social, physical, creative and intellectual development of children

- to promote the welfare of children
- to encourage positive attitudes to self and others and develop confidence and self-esteem
- to create opportunities for play
- to encourage children to explore the world
- to provide opportunities to stimulate interest and imagination
- to extend children's abilities to communicate ideas and feelings in a variety of ways

In general, the curriculum review group found that the existing guidance in this area was working relatively well but could do with minor updating. In addition there could be better continuity between early years and primary, especially in learning and teaching approaches. The new Scottish Government intend to publish an early years strategy in 2008.

5-14 CURRICULUM

The 5-14 curriculum takes children through primary school and the first two years of secondary school. 'Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages' (SCCC 1999b), which has been revised a number of times since 1987, and "5-14 Guidelines" produced by LTS are the key guidance in this area. All the guidelines can be accessed at: http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/5to14/guidelines/.

The overall aim is to promote teaching that adheres to the five underlying principles of: breadth; balance; coherence; continuity and progression. The 5-14 curriculum is divided into five broad curricular areas. The guidance also recommends the minimum time that should be spent on each of these as follows:

Minimum time allocations in primary schools

1. language (including modern language from no later than P6): 20%
2. mathematics: 15%
3. environmental studies society, science and technology:15%
4. expressive arts (drama, music art and physical education):15%
5. religious and moral education with personal and social education and health education: 15%

Minimum time allocations in S1-S2 over two years:

1. language: 20%
2. mathematics: 10%
3. environmental studies, science and technology: 30%
4. expressive arts and physical education:15%
5. religious and moral education: 5%

Some aspects, such as information and communication technology, are developed in all areas of the curriculum. A flexibility factor of 20% remains for schools to incorporate activities that reflect their own needs and priorities. Schools have been encouraged by the Executive, through the issuing of a circular (Scottish Executive 2001), to make the best use of the remaining 20% flexibility they have available to them.

While the guidelines are not compulsory "they have been adopted in most schools and have tended to become the norm, encouraged by inspections and local authority policy" (Priestley 2005). The 5-14 curriculum is divided into five levels A to E, covering P1 to S2. The table below sets out the usual stage of education at which pupils are expected to be working at each level.

Table 1: 5-14 Attainment Levels

Stage	Attainment Level
S2	Level E
S1	Level E
P7	Level D, E
P6	Level C, D
P5	Level C, D
P4	Level B,C
P3	Level A, B
P2	Level A
P1	Level A

(SOED 1991)

THE CURRICULUM FROM S3 TO S6

National Qualifications

S3 and S4 cover the ages 14-16. Generally, after the first two years of secondary school, pupils begin courses within the National Qualifications (NQs) framework. Table 2 below shows how these relate to each other and to the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF).

Table 2: Current curriculum qualifications and stages

SCQF Level	Qualification	Usual stage
7	Advanced Higher	S6
6	Higher	S5
5	Intermediate 2, Standard Grade (Credit)	Generally S3 and S4 but can also be taken in other years.
4	Intermediate 1, Standard Grade (General)	
3	Access 3, Standard Grade (Foundation)	
2	Access 2	
1	Access 1	

The NQ framework covers Standard Grades and National Units/Courses. There are three levels of study at Standard Grade (Credit, General and Foundation). Pupils usually take exams at two levels – Credit and General or General and Foundation. National Units/Courses are available at seven levels – Access 1, 2 and 3, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher. Further information is contained in 'Scotland's National Qualifications: A Quick Guide' (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2006). The previous Executive provided guidance on the appropriate age and stage when young people can be presented for externally assessed qualifications (Scottish Executive 2005a).

Curriculum Design in S3/S4

The principles of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression within the curriculum remain for the S3 and S4 years although a greater degree of choice is allowed. There are eight curriculum areas in S3 and S4 that link in with the five curriculum areas in S1 and S2. The guidance (SCCC 1999b) recommends a minimum time allocation for each of the eight areas as outlined below, which represents approximately 70% of the total time available to pupils. Again, schools have been encouraged to use the remaining 30% flexibly. The eight curriculum areas are:

1. languages and communication: 360 hours
2. mathematical studies and applications: 200 hours
3. scientific studies and applications: 160 hours
4. social and environmental studies: 160 hours
5. technological activities and applications: 80 hours
6. creative and aesthetic activities: 80 hours
7. physical education: 80 hours
8. religious and moral education: 80 hours

While it is recommended that pupils should include systematic study within each of the above areas, the match between NQs and the areas is not exact and many courses contribute to more than one area. The curriculum guidance also stresses the need to make connections across all aspects of the curriculum. Furthermore, schools are required to incorporate core skills and aspects of personal and social development throughout the curriculum at all stages.

S5 and S6 Curriculum

While pupils can leave school after S4 the majority chose to stay on, at least until S5. The SCCC guidance notes that as pupils choose to return to S5/S6 on a voluntary basis, this stage of schooling should be characterised by negotiated programmes of study. Nevertheless, the school should ensure that the principles of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression are sustained.

THE 3-18 CURRICULUM REVIEW

In 2002 the previous Scottish Executive instigated a "National Debate on Education". The responses to the debate highlighted some areas for improvement in relation to the curriculum. In particular, responses suggested the need to:

- reduce overcrowding in the curriculum
- make learning more 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. Its task was to identify the purposes of education for the 3 to 18 age range as a whole and determine the key principles to be applied in redesigning the curriculum. The group's proposals and the Ministerial response to them were published in 2004. The following section outlines the developments of the Curriculum for Excellence since then.

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE

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 which have been in existence previously but sets them out more explicitly. They are also reflected 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". 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 and COSLA, 2007).

The curriculum review group also established clear principles for curriculum design, namely:

- challenges and enjoyment
- breadth
- progression
- depth
- personalisation and choice
- coherence
- relevance

These principles reflect the existing principles of breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression - the concepts of challenges and enjoyment, depth, personalisation and choice and relevance are new.

A Programme Board was established in 2004 to advise Ministers and to steer this programme. The Board completed its remit in December 2007. The Scottish Government Schools Directorate, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority and HM Inspectorate of Education are all partners in the programme.

In the first instance the 3-15 age group was targeted with an emphasis on de-cluttering the curriculum and giving teachers greater flexibility to teach in innovative and creative ways. The reforms are intended to:

- simplify and prioritise the current curriculum
- encourage more learning through experiences
- create a single framework for the curriculum and assessment 3-18

 "Progress and Proposals" (Scottish Executive 2006) made more detailed proposals, set out areas for further consideration and aimed to engage teachers in professional reflection. Key features of the new curriculum are:

- that 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

- guidelines on curriculum areas will set out both experiences and outcomes expected to be obtained from the area of study
- there is more emphasis on active learning – 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

The table below outlines the key developments since 2003. In addition, there is an ongoing process of engagement and development with the teaching profession, local authorities and other stakeholders. This includes conferences, the development of education authority contacts and gathering of good practice initiatives.

Table 3: Development of A Curriculum for Excellence

Date	Development
November 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. Ministers establish a Programme Board to advise ministers and to work towards putting the principles into practice
2005	Groups were established across eight curriculum areas to review existing guidance and provide initial advice on updating simplifying and Skills for Work courses in schools and colleges were piloted.
2006	*Progress and Proposals* (Scottish Executive 2006) made more detailed proposals and aimed to engage teachers in professional reflection. Building the Curriculum materials were published to allow staff to start preparing for working with the revised curriculum. In December, a Teachers for Excellence debate attracted 15,000 visits to the website.
2007	Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning in the Early Years material published and Planet Earth outcomes gave an outline of what part of the revised science curriculum might look like Programme Board completed its remit, December 2007
September 2007 to June 2008	Draft experiences and outcomes released for engagement covering specific subject areas for ages 3-15 (pre-school to S4)
2008	Continuing release of and engagement on draft experiences and outcomes including trialling them in a range of schools. A consultation on qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 is expected. Consideration of the arrangements for accountability and inspection
2009/10	Schools begin to deliver Curriculum for Excellence

THE LEVELS OF THE CURRICULUM

A key theme is that the curriculum needs to be viewed in a different way- as a single framework that promotes learning across a wide range of contexts and experiences. This single framework will be divided into five levels from 'early' to 'fourth'. There is also a senior phase.   Table 4 below, relates the curricular levels to stages of education.

Table 4: 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
fourth	level 4.

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

The fourth level draft outcomes and experiences 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. The Senior Phase covers S4 to S6 where a young person can take a qualification as whatever level is appropriate to that individual. A young person can enter the senior phase at any level.

DRAFT OUTCOMES AND EXPERIENCES ENGAGEMENT

The requirements for each curriculum area are being developed in terms of statements about outcomes and experiences that pupils will have achieved. Draft experiences and outcomes covering the curriculum from age 3 to 15 are subject to an engagement process from November 2007 until December 2008. The timetable is set out below, which shows those already published in bold. Once the individual curriculum areas have been consulted on, there will be an engagement on the draft experiences and outcomes as a whole. This will focus on how well they fit together to form a coherent whole.

Table 5: Engagement on draft experiences and outcomes 3-15

	Engage from	Engage until
numeracy	November 2007	March 2008
Science	November 2007	March 2008
Modern languages	November 2007	March 2008
Classical languages	December 2007	April 2008
Gaelic learners	December 2007	April 2008
Maths	December 2007	April 2008
Expressive arts	January 2008	May 2008
Social studies	January 2008	May 2008
English	February 2008	June 2008
Gàidhlig for fluent speakers	February 2008	June 2008
Religious and Moral education	April 2008	October 2008
Religious Education (denominational)	April 2008	October 2008
Technologies	May 2008	November 2008
Health and wellbeing	May 2008	November 2008
Draft outcomes as a whole	August 2008	December 2008

Source: (LTS, 2007a)

During 2008, while feedback is being gathered, emerging key issues will be shared with the educational community through the Curriculum for Excellence newsletter and website. An analysis of the engagement process will be published. The process will include:

- 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
- trialling different draft experiences and outcomes in schools. This will involve trying out one or two curriculum areas in a few schools in each local authority. Teachers will consider how the draft experiences and outcomes relate to the work that they had already planned to do. i.e. it will not involve teaching different topics, but may involve different approaches.

The table below gives some examples of draft experiences and outcomes in two curricular areas across the different levels from 'early' to 'fourth'. The draft experiences and outcomes do not include outcomes for the 'senior' phase.

Table 6: Draft experiences and outcomes

Level	Example outcomes in social studies – people, past events and society	Example outcomes in numeracy - money
Early	I can make a personal link to the past by exploring items or images connected with important individuals or special events in my life	I am developing my awareness of how money is used and can recognise and use a range of coins.
First	By exploring places, investigating artefacts and interacting with people, I have developed an awareness of the ways in which we remember and preserve Scotland's history	I can use money to pay for items and can work out how much change I should receive
Second	By exploring places, investigating artefacts and discussing the past, I can interpret historical evidence to help build a picture of Scotland's heritage	I can manage money, compare costs from different retailers, and determine what I can afford to buy.
Third	To continue the development of my sense of heritage and identity, I can make links between my current and previous studies showing an understanding of how people and events have contributed to the development of the Scottish nation	I can source, compare and contrast different financial products, services and contracts and explain which offer best value to me.
Fourth	I have developed a wider sense of my heritage and identity as a British, European or global citizen and can present arguments about the importance of respecting the heritage and identity of others	I can discuss and illustrate the facts I need to consider when determining what I can afford, in order to manage credit and debt and lead a responsible lifestyle.

Source: (LTS 2007b, 2008)

CHANGES TO NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The Scottish Government is planning to consult on the future of qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (Standard Grade Credit and General/Intermediate 1 and 2) in 2008. Other changes to national qualifications of relevance to schools include:

- new skills for work courses
- introduction of Mandarin and Cantonese courses
- languages for work courses at Access 3 and Intermediate 1
- new units in Personal Development will be introduced to acknowledge activities and studies pupils undertake which may lie beyond the formal curriculum such as community involvement or work placements
- Higher History is being revised, with Scottish history becoming a compulsory element
- a new team at SQA are working on qualifications as they relate to the Curriculum for Excellence, Core Skills and More Choices, More Chances

(Stewart, 2007)

The Scottish Government is also considering how best to improve formal recognition of young people's achievements beyond formal qualifications.

SKILLS EDUCATION

One area that has attracted particular attention has been the relationship between 'vocational' and 'academic' education. This was a key focus of the OECD report into Scottish Education (OECD, 2007) (see below p. 14). The following outlines recent developments in the area of skills education in schools.

In September 2007 the Scottish Government published its Skills Strategy. This included consideration of the contribution which the school curriculum could make to the skills agenda. It stated that:

> "We will deliver our commitment of ensuring that vocational skills and qualifications have parity of esteem with academic skills and qualifications.
> We will ensure that the guidance on Curriculum for Excellence will provide for vocational learning, learning about the world of work and learning about the skills needed in the world of work as part of the curriculum, valued alongside other learning and not a separate experience perceived to be of lower value." (Scottish Government, 2007a)

Two key policy initiatives of the previous Executive were "Determined to Succeed" and "Skills for Work" courses.

Determined to Succeed

The previous Scottish Executive established 'Determined to Succeed' to increase enterprise education in Scottish schools. It was described as follows:

> *"Determined to Succeed* is comprised of four key themes: bringing enterprise in education into a coherent framework - enterprising learning; entrepreneurial learning; work-based and related vocational learning; and appropriately focused career information, advice and guidance. Each of these themes is underpinned by an enterprising pedagogy. So, *Determined to Succeed* is not about teaching enterprise as a subject, *per se*; rather teachers deliver their subject lessons in an enterprising way that contextualises learning, that involves employers wherever possible and makes learning

relevant in the context of the world of work and today's global environment." (Scottish Executive, 2007)

By 2007, over 7,000 agreements with local businesses and others had been signed (OECD, 2007).

Skills for Work Courses

In the ministerial response to "A Curriculum for Excellence", the Scottish Executive made a commitment to deliver a new set of qualifications, called Skills for Work to "extend choice and increase young people's motivation and enthusiasm for learning" (Scottish Executive 2004b). There are a number of possible models of delivery for Skills for Work qualifications. However, all approaches are likely to involve some form of close partnership arrangements, whether school-college, school-employer, or school-private training provider. Skills for Work courses are intended to help develop skills and knowledge in broad vocational areas as well as core skills and an understanding of the workplace. The courses aim to develop employability skills such as time-keeping, customer care and flexible approaches to solving problems.

The courses were introduced in August 2005 on a two-year pilot basis before being rolled out across all schools in Autumn 2007/08. HMIE reported positively on the pilot in September 2007 and an independent evaluation of Skills for Work is due to be published in early 2008. The interim evaluation report (Scottish Government, 2007b) found that almost all pupils interviewed enjoyed the courses and considered that they had increased their skills and improved their chances of finding work in the future. However, it also found that there were practical issues in relation to timetabling. There was some demand for more delivery within the school, but also an acknowledgement that many schools lacked the necessary specialist facilities and staff skills. As a result they would need to rely on partners to assist in delivery of the courses.

Thirteen Skills for Work courses are now available covering a range of subjects at different levels including Access, Intermediate and Higher. Subjects include construction, hairdressing, financial services, early education and childcare and rural skills. Another 6 courses are being developed (mostly at level 2 intermediate). These are:

- uniformed and emergency services
- energy
- engineering skills
- hairdressing
- hospitality and
- retailing

(Stewart, 2007)

More broadly, the Curriculum for Excellence provides a framework to develop Government priorities such as vocational learning and enterprise education. The Skills Strategy stated that:

> "Schools must, of course, equip young people with high levels of literacy and numeracy and ICT because, without these, the development of other skills is compromised. But over and above this pupils should have the opportunity to build up a strong foundation of a wide variety of skills and be able to present and demonstrate their skills in a way that will be of high value to themselves, their parents and carers, employers, colleges and universities. Against this background, we are committed to developing Scotland's worldwide reputation for excellence in enterprise education. We need to continue to create an enterprising culture in our schools and make the link between the classroom and the workplace so young people see the relevance of their learning. We need to maintain our focus on developing young people's enterprise and entrepreneurial skills

and attitudes so we create in them an appetite for innovation, ambition and wealth creation. And - as we make clear in this Strategy - we need to increase opportunities for and the esteem accorded to, vocational learning and training." (Scottish Government, 2007a)

OECD REPORT ON SCOTTISH EDUCATION

The previous Executive asked the OECD to review Scottish Education. The review team visited Scotland in March 2007 and reported in December. The report included consideration of curriculum reform and its findings are summarised below:

> "Earlier curriculum reform in Scotland was focussed on lifting levels of participation by adjusting academic demands. Today the concern has to be with translating participation into achievement. Earlier reform efforts differentiated examination levels to allow certification of achievement at different levels. That has created space for new populations to complete school. But it has not created incentives to achieve well." (OECD, 2007)

The report considered that: "vocational studies – if viewed broadly - are the most powerful vehicle for implementing a Curriculum for Excellence." The rationale for this is that good vocational education emphasises shared learning approaches, problem solving and applied learning. "We see the future of curriculum reform in Scotland as requiring a major revaluation of and national investment in vocational studies." The report therefore identified a key barrier to change as being the divide between academic and vocational education and identified four key issues:

1. *the need for a broad policy on vocational studies.* The report suggested there was a divide between 'mainstream' 3-18 curriculum development and the development of 'Skills for Work' courses. The report's authors said they would be concerned if Skills for Work courses had too narrow a focus on employability rather than being designed to reflect Curriculum for Excellence values.

2. *the delivery of vocational studies.* The report was concerned that courses should not be 'farmed out' to colleges. This risks "exporting the students whose needs most require curriculum reform. And it views the vocational subjects which are outsourced as largely for employability, not as vehicles of broader cognitive and personal growth."

3. *programme structure or modular flexibility.* Unlike other areas of the curriculum, there is not clear progression in vocational studies. Rather there are individual units or courses with the emphasis on flexibility. The authors worry that: "This preference runs the risk of incoherence, low prestige and diminished impact. Flexibility is not necessarily an advantage to young people whose levels of achievement exclude them from the clearest and most secure passages through school to further education and work."

4. *examinations and qualifications.* The report states that: "by operating examinations at S4, Scotland retains a significant barrier to progression." It argues that as most pupils stay on "the examinations tend to enforce a terminal perspective or at least to reinforce a view about VET[1] studies as being for students leaving school." […] "The use of examinations for S3/S4 students does not appear compatible with a wider and more strategic use of vocational studies aimed at improving engagement and achievement."

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[1] Vocational education and training

The report suggests that, if the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence are to be met, this requires "(a) continuing and certified education and training effort beyond the compulsory years and (b) a concept of completion or graduation which sets minimum standards and reflects the four purposes of the curriculum." The report made eight recommendations on the curriculum which are contained in the annex to this briefing.

ROLE OF SUBJECTS

There have been some concerns expressed about what role individual subjects will play in the revised curriculum structure. This issue gained media attention, particularly in relation to history, in late 2005 (e.g. Scotland on Sunday 2006). The then Education Minister, Peter Peacock MSP, had made remarks at a conference which some interpreted as implying that history would no longer be taught as a discrete subject in schools. Although the Minister stressed that his comments were taken out of context, it prompted history teachers to lobby MSPs on the matter. In November 2007, the Scottish Qualifications Authority announced that Scottish History will be a compulsory element in the Higher course (Herald 20 November 2007). There was also a Scottish Parliament debate in January 2008 on the place of Scottish History in the curriculum (Scottish Parliament, 2008).

Concerns about the role of individual subjects in the curriculum were raised in a parliamentary debate in March 2006. During the debate the then Minister stressed that:

> " ..subjects will inevitably always be part of how we structure learning…I fully expect that, in future, we will have the current range of subjects in schools, although the contribution that subjects make to schools' purposes needs to adapt with the changing times and challenges." (Scottish Parliament 2006).

While the review's intention of increasing the interdisciplinary activities of subjects has been welcomed by some professionals, there have been some concerns. In March 2007 the Registrar of the General Teaching Council for Scotland was reported in the Herald as recognising the need for greater interdisciplinary learning. However, he expressed fears that an "unintended consequence" could be "the undermining of the very subjects which are at the heart of the school system, particularly in secondary schools" (Herald 1 March 2007).

Therefore, it seems as though the need to achieve an appropriate balance between individual subjects and interdisciplinary approaches in the revised guidance and practice, will be a challenge for the Scottish Government and for professionals in practice.

Related to this is the issue of the level of content of the guidance on individual curricular areas. The move to an approach based on experiences and outcomes is intended to give teachers greater flexibility in how they approach learning and encourage greater cross curricular activities. However, there has been debate about how much detailed content the revised guidance should contain, the extent to which this broad approach can be easily applied in practice and whether this will mean a loss of in-depth learning in particular subjects. On the other hand Douglas Marr, a member of HM Inspectorate of Education and former head teacher in Aberdeenshire, has suggested that those teachers "becoming impatient for more detail" were missing the point of A Curriculum for Excellence. He was concerned that some teachers had held on to the 5-14 "security blanket" (Times Educational Supplement TES 16 March 2007).

Since these concerns were raised draft experiences and outcomes have been released. What is clear is that the revised curriculum will require subject teachers to approach their subjects in a different way. This raises issues about implementation of the revised curriculum in practice.

IMPLEMENTATION

Much of the change in the curriculum will centre on how teaching is carried out and this will be a long term process. For all teachers there will be a greater emphasis on employing a broader range of approaches, adapting to different learning styles and working more with other colleagues. In addition, teachers across all subjects will be expected to have a responsibility to develop pupils' skills for life and skills for work, including literacy and numeracy. Specifically, in the early primary years there will be a greater emphasis on active learning through play.

While some teachers will already be familiar with these approaches, for others it will represent more of a cultural change. The curriculum review is being accompanied by a process of professional engagement and professional development, but it is likely that this will still be required over a much longer period to effect genuine change. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) has stressed the need for teachers to be given adequate time within their working week to meet and discuss the issues arising from the review and for education authorities to enable the teachers they employ to undertake the required professional development (EIS 2006).

The approach of the Curriculum for Excellence is not to provide detailed guidance from the centre. However, there have been concerns about whether the balance is right. In October 2007, the GTCS were reported as being concerned about the Government's approach to implementation. While supporting the underlying values, they were concerned that progress was slow and suggested that there was a lack of confidence about Curriculum for Excellence which was "breeding uncertainty" among teachers. They said there was "a need for a road map showing the direction of travel and specific, clear, meaningful milestones". They were concerned about how much genuine 'decluttering' was happening and whether a move to cross-curricular work threatened the integrity of specific subjects (TES, 5 October 5, 2007). At this stage only the science and numeracy draft experiences and outcomes had been published.

On the other hand, David Cameron, director of children's services at Stirling Council, said in November 2007: "The curriculum for excellence offers a genuinely exciting way forward, but there is a danger of people waiting for something to be delivered. If that happens, we will get a much more traditional curriculum than hoped for." (Scotsman 26 November 2007)

Individual local authorities will expand on the draft outcomes and experiences to develop their own guidance. North Lanarkshire has been one of the first to do this building on themes in their existing Raising Achievement for All agenda. The TES reported that Jane Liddell, head of education quality and development at the council:

> "summed up the approach as looking at what they were doing, keeping what they were best at, and putting aside things that weren't working. She recognised that staff had not been used to working in the creative way demanded by the new curriculum, and that the prospect of this "brave new world" could be threatening. The council acknowledged the anxiety created by trying to implant creativity and personalisation in the curriculum while still operating in a framework of Standard grades and Highers. […] Ms Liddell said: "It is clear that colleagues, while welcoming changes, are also worried that existing structures will not be relaxed sufficiently to allow for the creativity and innovation now expected of them" (TES, 2008).

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The new approach to the curriculum will have an impact on existing assessment and certification structures. Appropriate and proportionate assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching, by providing evidence about both the quantity and quality of a pupil's learning and progress. This ensures that pupils, parents, teachers and other professionals have the feedback they need to make effective decisions about learning.

Since 2002, the AifL (Assessment is for Learning) programme has supported professional practice in assessment, better quality assurance of teachers' judgements about pupils' learning and progress and has introduced a national monitoring system (the Scottish Survey of Achievement) to integrate with school-based assessment practice.

The Scottish Government is currently looking at next steps to ensure that AifL principles continue to be strengthened across Scotland. Assessment guidance and existing mechanisms of support will be reviewed as part of the Curriculum for Excellence programme.

There has been concern about how national qualifications will fit in to the Curriculum for Excellence framework. (Scotsman 8 December 2007). There is an expectation that Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will remain, although they will have to adapt over time to reflect the Curriculum for Excellence. As mentioned above, a consultation on qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (i.e standard grade, intermediate 1 and 2) is planned for 2008.

It is also intended to secure better recognition of pupils' wider achievements beyond National Qualifications without creating additional formal assessment and workload pressures. In 2008-09 the Scottish Government hopes to establish a number of action research projects, in partnership with local authorities, looking at existing activities and to test out new ideas. The overarching aim is to develop broad national guidance and exemplification to promote key principles and good practice.

ANNEX: OECD RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE CURRICULUM.

The OECD report, *Quality and Equity of Schooling* in Scotland made 18 recommendations. Those under the heading 'A comprehensive, structures and accessible curriculum' are reproduced below:

- That each local authority develop an explicit policy framework which contains a charter of learning opportunities – a commitment to provide a range of education and training places in a delivery configuration which best suits the circumstances and needs of its communities (Recommendation 7).

- That, as a matter of national policy, vocational courses be accessible to all young people in schools from S3, and that sequences of study be developed spanning the compulsory and post-compulsory years. (Recommendation 8).

- That the Scottish Government support school-based provision of vocational courses where local authorities seek to implement this model within the framework of the national innovation plan (Recommendation 9).

- That each local authority establish a curriculum planning and pathways network which links schools, colleges and employer groups to assist in establishing a charter of learning opportunities and defining the pathways through school to further education, training and employment (Recommendation 10).

- That Standard Grade examinations be phased out as the new 3-18 curriculum is implemented and as clearer and more effective pathways are established for the whole range of young people (Recommendation 11).

- That a Scottish Certificate of Education be developed to sanction completion of an approved programme of studies or training, whether in schools, college or employment. This 'graduation' certificate should have defined minimum requirements to reflect the purposes of the new 3-18 curriculum, but also substantial flexibility as to content, level and duration of studies to ensure accessibility (Recommendation 12).

- That young people proceeding to S5 undertake a programme of studies with specified minimum standards leading to the award of a Scottish Certificate of Education at the end of that year or at the end of S6, depending on the individual study pattern (Recommendation 13).

- That those young people who choose to leave at the end of compulsory schooling negotiate an individual plan for futher education and training to be undertaken over the next two years under supervision of an appropriate authority (e.g a college), and that, if specified minimum standards of achievement or competency are met, they be awarded a Scottish Certificate of Education (Recommendation 14).

(OECD, 2007).

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