

Scotland's Adult Literacies Curriculum Framework Guidelines: learning, teaching and assessment



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Foreword



We want every citizen in Scotland to have the literacies capabilities necessary to bridge the poverty gap, to understand and shape the world they live in, and to enjoy the rich knowledge and benefits that being able to read, write and use numbers can bring.

Strategic Guidance for Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020.

This review of the Adult Literacies Curriculum Framework confirms the importance of literacies to the life of the nation, the community, and the individual. Adult literacy enables and encourages adults in Scotland to acquire the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to be active and productive individuals and to contribute to society. In this publication, the term *adult* includes young people who are transitioning to adulthood whether leaving school, leaving care, starting work, or entering further learning. It is important to see adult literacies within the overall context of lifelong learning regardless of where, when and how the learning is delivered. There is a strong correlation between this government's commitment to the education of children and young people and supporting adults to develop and fulfil their potential.

We want adult learning in Scotland to be *a model of excellence that is recognised across the world in terms of inclusion, learner focus and its role in empowering individuals, families and communities to develop, grow and prosper both socially and economically.*

Adult Learning in Scotland
Statement of Ambition 2014

Improved literacies make a substantial difference to adults progression into further learning, better employment opportunities and enable them to make more effective contributions to society.

I hope you will make good use of these refreshed guidelines to continue to improve the quality of learning and experiences for adults across our country.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville,
Minister for Further Education,
Higher Education and Science**

Introduction and background

These curriculum guidelines build on the original document *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland*¹ (ALN Curriculum Framework), which was published in 2004, three years after the launch of Scotland's first adult literacies strategy, *Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland*² (ALNIS).

The ALN Curriculum Framework was designed to have a major role in implementing that strategy, at the levels of learning, teaching, assessment and the learning experience. Its underpinning principles sought to embed in Scottish adult literacies practice:

- an understanding of literacy and numeracy as critical social practices and complex capabilities;
- the positioning of the learner as central to their learning; and
- the importance of individually negotiated and planned learning that focused on the application of learned skills, knowledge and understanding.

Policy and practice relating to learning change over time: approaches that were once new become embedded and 'second nature' in practice. At the same time, policies, and the governments that make them, change – economic, social and political imperatives require particularly focused interventions, for example, on youth unemployment, poverty, or health and wellbeing.

In 2010 the Scottish Government launched a refreshed strategy for adult literacies: *Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: strategic guidance*³ (ALIS 2020). This policy, which was developed with national key stakeholders, sought to build on ALNIS. It set out 'shared priorities' for Scotland to achieve its vision for improving adults' literacies capabilities — and it asked stakeholders, whether national agencies, local authorities or other organisations, to create action plans for what they would do to implement the policy's actions and achieve its outcomes.

ALIS 2020 identifies four key themes that stakeholders agreed should have priority. Those themes are:

- literacies for employability and work;
- literacies and financial capability;
- literacies and families; and
- literacies and health and wellbeing.

ALIS 2020 outlines the important role of adult literacies in taking forward other Scottish Government policies. Of particular relevance is

the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence⁴ which aims to provide 'a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum' from ages 3 to 18. This Curriculum for Excellence encourages a learner centred approach based on collaborative working and is informed by concepts such as 'every day is a learning day' and 'anytime, anywhere learning'. This approach is echoed in *Adult Learning in Scotland, a Statement of Ambition*⁵ (2014) which reflects a continuing commitment to 'learner-centred, life-wide, lifelong learning'. Life wide learning includes that undertaken through community learning and development (CLD). CLD supports people to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities through learning. Local authorities are now required by legislation to develop three-year plans as to how they will deliver this learning to meet community needs⁶.

Relevant policy developments are explained in more detail in Annex A.

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-curriculum-framework-scotland>

² www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/158952/0043191.pdf

³ www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/01/25121451/1

⁴ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/

⁵ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/statementofambition.asp

⁶ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/cldregulations/index.asp

The reason for the refreshed document

Adult literacies practice has developed since the publication of the ALN Curriculum Framework. This review and update reflects:

- priorities for adult literacies and related work
- developments and improvements in practice
- guidance on learning, teaching and assessment
- developments in adult literacies policy
- developments in adult learning policy.

What is the purpose of the guidelines?

These guidelines will be of interest to policy makers, learning providers, and those who tutor literacies in a wide range of contexts. They aim to:

- improve, by encouraging an alignment of practice among providers, the quality of Scottish adult literacies provision for learners
- reaffirm the Scottish philosophy and approach to adult literacies, in whatever context the learning takes place
- provide initial guidance on planning, delivering, assessing and evaluating adult literacies learning in Scotland
- describe the policy context for adult literacies work so that the achievement of adult literacies outcomes can be seen in broader terms
- stimulate reflection and ideas
- introduce ideas for organising and targeting provision
- promote discussion about the learning and teaching of literacies to adults and young people, and about what is learned and taught.

Terms used in these guidelines

An explanation of the terms used in these guidelines is included in Annex C.

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Section A: Learning, teaching and assessment

This section presents the principles that underpin adult literacies practice and includes a revised version of the wheel⁷ It outlines research evidence that shows what makes for effective adult literacies practice, and describes the five stages of the adult literacies learning cycle. It ends with a description of different modes of adult literacies practice.

Principles underpinning adult literacies practice

Adult literacies practice involves:

- the design of provision;
- planning and reviewing individual and group learning;
- learning and teaching activities;
- assessment and evaluation; and
- support and guidance.

The Scottish approach to adult literacies practice is underpinned by a number of principles. These five principles are set out below, and they should underpin all aspects of adult literacies practice:

1. The learner is at the centre of their learning, and progress in learning is planned and paced appropriately to their needs and wants.

Individual learners' immediate and longer term needs and aspirations should lead the learning. At times, the requirements of a qualification or course might need to be balanced with the learner's interests and priorities, but in most circumstances the learner should be involved in setting the priorities and the pace of learning.

2. The social practice approach is the most effective way to build the literacies capabilities of individuals and communities.

The social practice approach, with its emphasis on the critical application of capabilities in everyday interactions and tasks, ensures that learners do not merely *acquire skills*, as set out in a syllabus. Relevant social practices will differ between individuals: for one learner their social practice might be daily use of money in shops, involving reading labels, estimating prices in their head and checking change; for another it might involve helping their children with homework, whether that homework involves reading, writing, or numbers; and for another, the social practice might be passing an entrance exam to get onto a college course or to gain a job.

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-curriculum-framework-scotland>

3. Literacies are not a set of prescribed skills to be acquired, but should be seen as complex, critical capabilities that are fit to meet the needs of the modern, changing world.

A more traditional view of literacies capabilities might see them as the three Rs of reading, writing and (a)rithmetic: lists of skills to be learned, practised, and applied without depth of thought or understanding. Similarly, in this conception, the way people learn times tables, or algorithms for subtraction, are only memorised, with understanding coming second, if at all.

Understanding literacies as ‘complex, critical capabilities’ acknowledges the interdependence of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the subtle use and appropriate application of these according to different situations.

The word ‘critical’ refers to the fact that knowledge, skills and understanding are weighed according to situations, selected with care, used appropriately, and reflected upon afterwards. Learners who are critical in their application of learning ask questions of themselves and of problems they need to solve.

4. Numeracy learning opportunities are as important as literacy learning opportunities and should be available to all learners in all learning provision.

Research suggests that in some circumstances numeracy can be more important than literacy, not only as a marker of social and economic wellbeing (Bynner and Parsons 2008), but in terms of capabilities that are necessary for the workplace and the use of modern technologies. Numeracy difficulties often have less ‘stigma’ than literacy difficulties; but with numeracy difficulties often comes ‘maths anxiety’, which can damage a learner’s confidence and present a real barrier to their achievement.

5. Literacies learning should be inclusive and empowering.

Many learners will want to develop their numeracy, oral, reading and writing capabilities in broad ways, in order to learn new skills or strengthen existing ones. They will welcome the chance to negotiate what else they might learn, and how they might progress to new levels of learning.

For others, literacies learning will have a concrete, short-term goal, such as passing a test to join the police or to get into a nursing course. Or it might be limited to a topic: for example, understanding percentages in order to help a child with their homework. In themselves, these well-defined goals are important social practices.

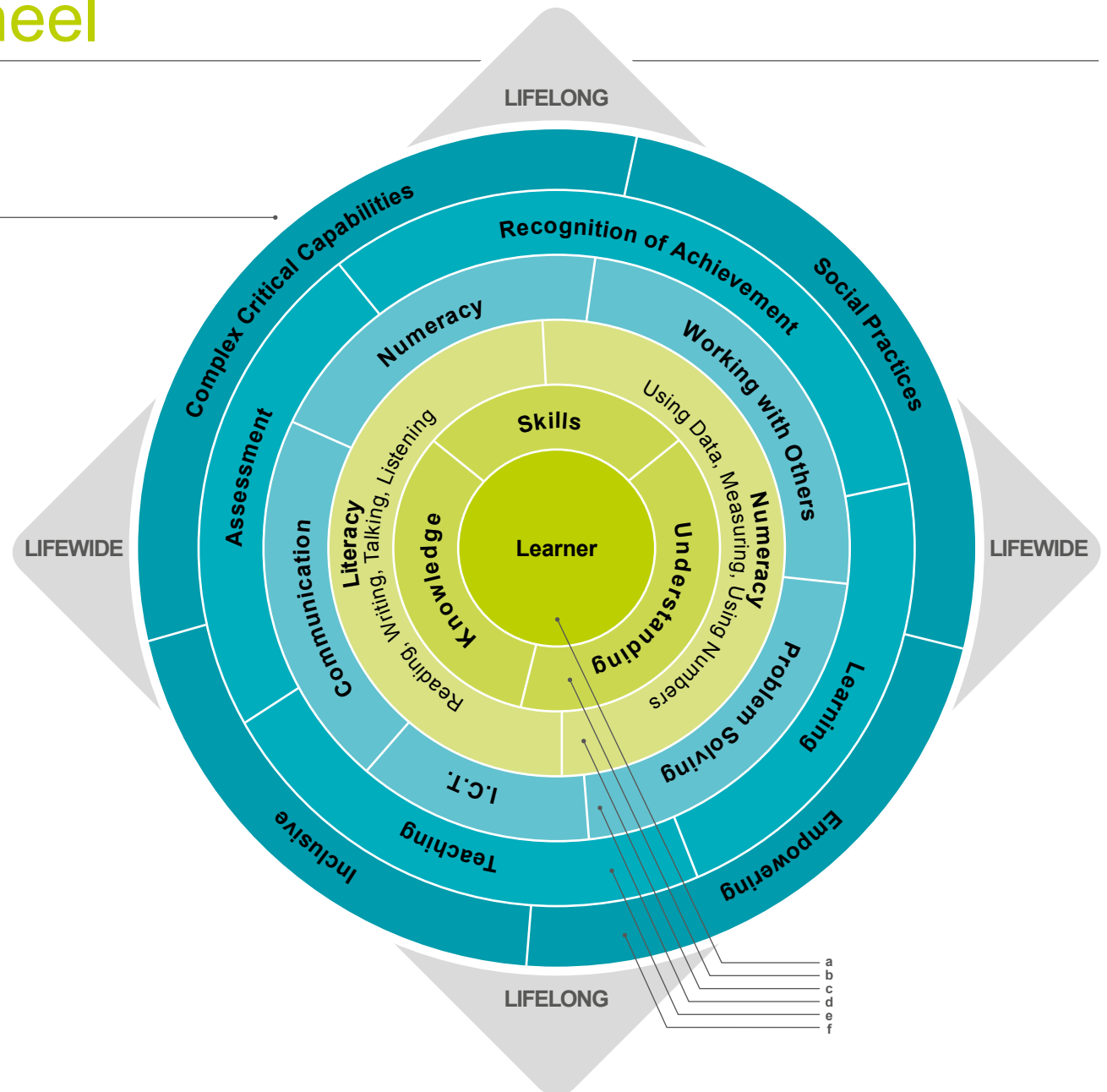
In both situations, the learning provider should ensure learners feel included in planning their learning, and in deciding the mode of learning that suits them best. Learning should be celebrated, and given appropriate recognition (including through accreditation), and the learner should be offered the chance to extend their learning according to their needs and wants.

The curriculum wheel

The ALN Curriculum Framework included a visual demonstration of the way the learner sits at the centre of the learning experience.

These guidelines include a refreshed version of the wheel, in response to developments in policy and practice.

- a)** The learner remains at the centre of the wheel (reflecting Principle 1).
- b)** These are the complex capabilities relating to the application of learned skills, knowledge and understanding.
- c)** Numeracy capabilities have equal weight with literacy capabilities (relating to Principle 4).
- d)** These are the five Core Skills.
- e)** These are the linked activities of learning, teaching and assessment, and recognition of achievement, which might take the form of accreditation.
- f)** These reflect the principles identified in these guidelines.



What we know about the learning, teaching and assessment of adult literacies

The following information is taken from research and evaluations of adult literacies practice internationally and in Scotland. The perspective is holistic, looking at what features are found to contribute to ensuring effective adult literacies practice.

What components do we find in effective adult literacies learning journeys?

OECD research (Looney, 2008)⁸ identifies five 'steps' that need to be in place to ensure effective 'foundation skills' in language, literacy and numeracy (adapted from the original):

- 1. Diagnosing learning needs and setting goals —** these first steps in the learning journey set the tone and direction for learning.
- 2. Relationships that enrich the learning —** these involve five elements:
 - a)** building rapport and creating a 'safe' environment
 - b)** using dialogue to promote participatory and democratic learning
 - c)** negotiating learning goals and methods
 - d)** structuring dialogue to meet specific learning goals
 - e)** using dialogue to establish what learners do and do not know, and to adjust teaching to meet identified learning needs.
- 3. Techniques: feedback, questioning, and scaffolding —** this underlines the importance of formative assessment, including techniques of feedback, questioning and scaffolding, in order to uncover learners' understanding, to help tutors pitch learning at the right level, and to help learners progressively improve their skills.
- 4. Developing learner autonomy —** autonomy begins with learners' involvements as partners in the learning and assessment process. Learners should develop the confidence to use their own judgment regarding their development and the development of their capabilities, and for identifying gaps in their learning. This is fundamentally about individuals learning how to learn, understanding their own learning, and being able to reflect constructively on their progress.
- 5. Recognition of learner progress —** this relates to formative and summative assessment of learning progress, often involving externally-set assessment criteria (for a qualification or portfolio), but not always.

⁸ Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Adults: Improving Foundation Skills
www.oecd.org/edu/ceeri/teachinglearningandassessmentforadultsimprovingfoundationskills.htm#1

A 2010 Aspect Report⁹ by HMIE (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) identified the following features of good practice in the delivery of adult literacy¹⁰ provision in colleges, communities and prisons:

- Providers take good account of individual and group needs and plan and contextualise learning activities to meet these needs.
- Providers offer good opportunities for learners to experience and discuss different types of learning and teaching approaches.
- Providers make good use of resources, including ICT to enhance and extend learning.
- Providers deliver learning activities which develop learner confidence and independence in learning and prepare them for progression.
- Providers have effective arrangements in place for identifying and addressing the continuing professional development needs of staff.

Improving Adult Literacy HMIE Aspect Report (2010)

What contributes to learners' persistence and success?

Research into learner persistence (Lopez, 2007; Maclachlan et al, 2008)¹¹, suggests that learners are more likely to persist with their learning and to achieve their goals when:

- the ethos of the organisation is welcoming, supportive and confidence building, where learners can feel at ease and secure in returning after absences from learning;
- provision recognises the life goals that learners are passionate about;
- there is a responsive, but challenging pace of learning; and
- learner progress is monitored and recognised, with learner goals in place that are revisited regularly.

Progress towards outcomes such as improved self-confidence, should be recognised within a 'broad framework' of achievement, with formative assessment recognising small steps as well as significant gains.

The research also suggests that distance and blended learning opportunities can help learners to sustain their learning during unavoidable gaps in, for example, attendance on a course. This way learners are not penalised. Digital technologies can support distance learning.

Using digital technologies to support adult literacies learning

Our use of digital and online media in everyday life and at work is increasing. Many transactions we would formerly have carried out in person, face-to-face or by speaking on the phone, can now be done online. We can order shopping, send greetings cards and manage banking online on our computers, tablets, smartphones, and even watches. In order to receive discounts on bills some businesses require customers to switch to online-only accounts. Further, some public services are moving to online-only, for example, Universal Credit¹².

⁹ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ialis_tcm4-712918.pdf

¹⁰ The report did not consider numeracy

¹¹ <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/119568>

¹² www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/universal-credit-an-introduction

It is therefore important that literacies learning takes account of online and digital social practices. Where once learners might have practised writing postcards and letters, now they might be better practising writing text messages, emails, and social media posts, or using online 'chat' facilities, for example to talk to their phone, broadband or energy provider. Additionally, it is important that literacies learning supports learners to be safe online.

Digital technologies can be used as a teaching and learning resource, for example, through the use of an interactive whiteboard, online quizzes, apps on smartphones and tablets, or digital photography and video.

Digital technology can also be used to provide blended and distance learning, for example, with tutors and learners communicating through email, Skype or through virtual learning environments such as a Moodle¹³.

Research shows that digital technologies can enhance and improve literacies learning because they can:

- be adapted to the profiles of individual learners;
- give the learner control over the learning experience;
- better engage the learner through, for example, quizzes, games, and visual learning, that encourage the learner to spend more on a task and enhance motivation; and
- support adults in practising their literacies skills outside learning sessions through, for example, collaborative technologies such as text messaging, Facebook, wikis, blogs or even simple word-processing packages¹⁴.

While digital technologies can increase learner engagement, particularly through the use of social media that can provide instant responses and feedback, some groups of learners, especially older learners and those with low incomes, may be unable to access learning using interactive technologies¹⁵. Care should be taken to ensure that learners have easy access both as part of their programmes and outside

the literacies session, for example in a local library or drop-in learning centre. It is vital that people are not further disadvantaged by having insufficient support for their learning in our digital world.

Adult literacies practitioners can take advantage of guidance and training that has been produced by the Digitally Agile Community Learning and Development project. See the Digitally Agile CLD website¹⁶ for more information.

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¹³ <http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/moodle>

¹⁴ Lesgold, A. and Welch-Ross, M. (2012) (Eds.) *Improving adult literacy instruction: options for practice and research*, Washington D.C.: National Academies Press

¹⁵ Vorhaus, J. Litster, J. Frearson, M. and Johnson, S. (2011) *Review of research and evaluation on improving adult literacy and numeracy skills*, BIS, Research Paper 61, December, 2011

¹⁶ www.digitallyagileclld.org

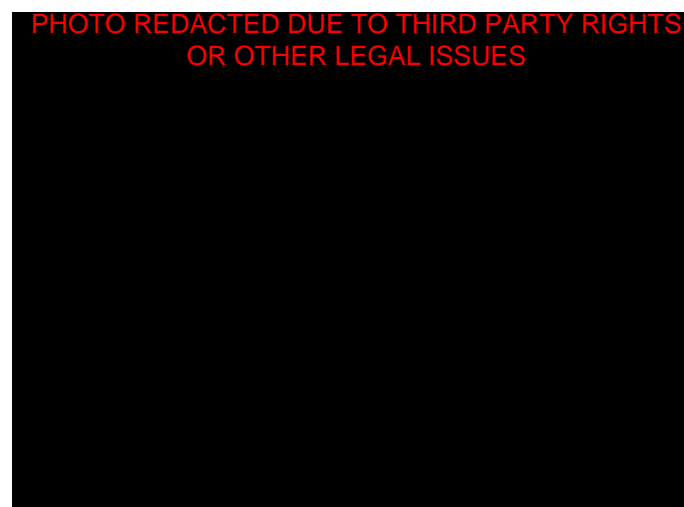
Key principles of learning and teaching

Research that preceded the development of the ALN Curriculum Framework identified some key principles of adult literacies learning and teaching. These principles are still relevant.

Adult literacies learning is most effective when:

1. Learning is a purposeful, goal-directed activity. Ongoing goal setting and self-assessment are central to effective learning.
2. Purposeful learning builds on learners' prior knowledge and experience to shape and construct new knowledge. It should always be remembered that those who have faced prejudice and discrimination based on gender, race, age, sexuality, disability or experience of care, may have internalised some of these negative ideas about their capacity to learn.
3. Learning is a social activity embedded in a particular culture and context. Learning occurs through engaged participation in the activities of knowledge communities such as workplace colleagues, friends with common interests, or family members.
4. Effective transfer of learning from one context to another requires that the learner understands not only the facts but also the 'big picture' – underlying principles, patterns and relationships – that is acquired through the application of knowledge.
5. Knowing when and how to apply what has been learned (procedural knowledge) is central to expertise, and can be acquired only through practice.
6. Teaching involves informed interpretations of, and responses to, learners' approaches to learning. Tutors should always be aware of the effect of prejudice and discrimination on learners.
7. Metacognitive strategies (knowledge about one's own thinking processes) can be taught. Through monitoring and assessing their own progress, learners can develop metacognitive awareness and strategies to enable deep learning and adaptability, as well as higher order thinking.
8. Scaffolding instruction helps learners to develop their fluency, independence and range as they move from being a new learner to becoming an expert learner.

Adapted from *An Adult Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland (2004)*



Engaging learners

It is important to recognise the work involved in engaging learners – potential learners are often termed ‘hard to reach’, services could instead be described as ‘difficult to access’. Potential learners may face multiple barriers to engaging or re-engaging in learning.

Literacies providers often rely on the support of partner organisations to help people to engage in learning. Building successful relationships with partners is a key activity for providers and may involve running training and awareness sessions for staff (for example, in the local Jobcentre Plus, housing association, or money advice centre). Key literacies workers often attend initial meetings to support a new learner with the confidence needed to ‘get them through the door’.

In other settings, such as workplaces, support systems may already be in place – for example, learners might attend their first meeting with a provider accompanied by a union learning representative.

Other support measures might also need to be put in place to reduce practical barriers for learners – these might include providing childcare and paying travel costs.

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Courtesy Jenny Reekie, West Lothian Council.

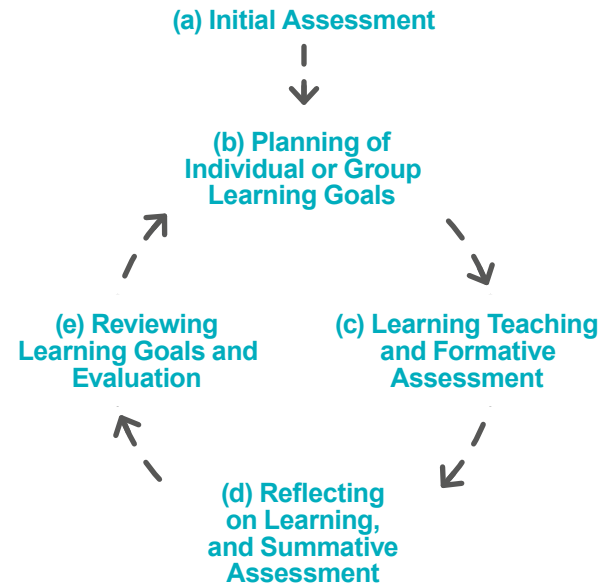
The adult literacies learning cycle

The learning cycle

The 'learning cycle' is a well-known way of understanding the cyclical processes involved in learning. In its simplest form it involves: planning, learning, reflecting and reviewing.

The adult literacies learning cycle follows a number of stages:

- a) initial assessment
- b) planning of individual or group learning goals
- c) learning, teaching and formative assessment
- d) reflecting on learning, and summative assessment
- e) reviewing learning goals and evaluating the programme.



This section of the guidelines is structured around this learning cycle.

What is assessment?

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. It helps to provide a picture of a learner's progress and achievements, and to identify next steps in learning. Assessment approaches should promote learner engagement and ensure appropriate support so that all learners can achieve their goals and maximise their potential.

Assessment practices should be seen from the perspective of the learner. Learners should be engaged in all aspects of assessment processes, whether initial, formative or summative, and be allowed choice and personalisation where possible in showing that they have achieved the intended outcomes of their learning.

a) Initial assessment

The first stage in developing a learning plan is the initial discussion and assessment process.

This initial discussion provides an opportunity for the learner and literacies worker to discuss available learning opportunities, options, approaches and practical details. It can also be used to reassure the learner, to gather information about their current literacies practices, and to identify longer-term goals. The literacies worker can use this information to guide the learner to the most appropriate provision.

It might be useful to ask some initial informal questions of learners at this stage to explore the possibility of specific learning difficulties. Information about specific learning difficulties is available in Section B below.

Carrying out the initial assessment

The process of discussion and negotiation may be assisted by the use of ‘alerting’, ‘placing’ or ‘diagnostic’ tools.

■ Alerting tools

Some organisations (for example, colleges, prisons and workplaces) want to offer literacies tuition to their clients or staff, but need to target their offer appropriately. In these situations, an

alerting tool designed for use with individuals who have no formal qualifications can be helpful.

The alerting tool is used to open the discussion with the learner about their uses of literacies, to give them an opportunity to demonstrate what they can do, and to speak about what they find more difficult. It should be emphasised that the alerting tool is not a ‘test’ – there is no ‘pass’ or ‘fail’. The tool is designed to do just that – to alert the learner and the ‘interviewer’ to whether a fuller diagnostic assessment might be useful in identifying more specific learning needs.

■ Placing tools

Placing tools help to identify the level of literacies learning that is appropriate for an individual learner. Such tools can be useful in contexts such as colleges where there may be a need to identify the most appropriate class for a learner to join. A more detailed assessment of learning needs (a diagnostic assessment) may then be facilitated by the tutor.

■ Diagnostic assessment

This term refers to a more thorough and specific assessment of a learner’s skills, knowledge and understanding, to identify their specific learning

needs. It often takes the form of a short task that will reveal strengths and areas that the learner finds tricky.

Often an informal discussion, using an individual learning plan format (see below), can be a more effective way of gathering information at a first meeting, and will help to put an anxious learner at ease. This can be added to by the tutor and learner over the first few learning sessions.

Tutors and co-ordinators should use their discretion about the appropriateness of using diagnostic tools with individual learners, and when to use them in the learning journey.

Initial assessment – getting it right

These questions will help you to think through your approaches to initial assessment:

- Are learners encouraged to identify their hopes or goals for learning?
- Are learners encouraged to talk about their interests and ways they will use their learning?
- Are you using tools that are appropriate for the context and setting, and for the learner’s purposes in learning?

b) Planning individual or group learning goals

Negotiation

Negotiating learning goals with a learner is a process which begins at the first meeting, and which continues during the whole time of contact with the individual. The outcomes of the negotiation will be recorded in an individual learning plan. In some settings, for example, in a college communication drop-in, negotiation could take place at every meeting; while in others, for example an issue-based group, it might occur every two or three weeks.

Negotiation involves the learner and tutor discussing what is available for learning and working towards agreement on how the learning will take place.

The elements of the curriculum that can be negotiated include:

- the literacies skills, knowledge and understanding which will be developed;
- the context in which they will be developed;
- the goal(s) the individual or group have set; and
- the resources which the learner might use.

Learners might want to negotiate any or all of these elements. For example, one learner may want to keep track of a budget for her bowling

club, thinking about its layout, and producing it on a computer. Similarly, a college learner might want to structure a report and phrase it appropriately for his social care course.

One of the difficulties with negotiating the curriculum can be that the learner is not aware of what is available to be learned and talks in broad terms of ‘improving my maths’ or ‘tidying up my handwriting’.

A list of prompt questions can be useful:

- What sort of maths do you do every day?
- How do you feel about your writing just now?

Some questions can lead towards a discussion of a desired outcome:

- What would you write if you felt okay about your spelling?
- What part(s) of your life would you like to see benefit most from working on your numbers – work, family, going on to other courses, joining local groups?

Often, taking part in group work can broaden an individual’s horizons. Watching what others are working on can often stimulate new ideas for learning and provide motivation for further learning and collaboration.

Setting measurable goals

Learners often find it difficult to articulate their learning goals. Asking questions such as ‘What brought you here?’ and ‘What sort of things would you be interested in finding out about?’ can help to open up discussions with the learner about their learning goals. The tutor will help the learner to set realistic and measurable goals through the process of breaking them into achievable learning tasks and steps.

The tutor and learner can break each task into three aspects:

- Developing certain skills and technical abilities (for example, numeracy problem solving, spelling, handwriting).
- Acquiring knowledge about the appropriate conventions to use (for example, how to lay out an addition sum, and when to use appropriate vocabulary).
- Developing critical understanding of how and why the literacies are being used, and to what purpose (for example, for recording, persuading, entertaining, influencing).

Individual learning plans (ILP)

Literacies learners who are working towards individual goals should have an ILP.

ILPs will vary depending on how specific or wide-ranging the learning goals are, the distance between current capabilities and desired outcomes, and the limitations of the learner's own capacity and timescales.

It is important that the learner understands the purpose of the ILP, and that it is used throughout the cycle of planning, learning, reflecting, reviewing progress against goals, and setting new goals or adapting existing ones. It is also important that the learner understands the language used in the ILP.

An ILP will:

- record the learner's contexts and goals, what they want to learn and how they want to learn it;
- include a record of initial discussions about learning and of any assessments carried out;
- identify issues which may affect a learner's ability to access provision and strategies for dealing with them, for example work or care commitments;

- set measurable goals so that the learner's progress can be assessed;
- provide a reminder for the learner of what the learning will involve (and details of the time and place of provision);
- encourage reflection on the effectiveness of learning;
- be developed over several sessions with a learner;
- help a tutor to focus on the individual's learning goals; and
- often be accompanied by various information leaflets for the learner, for example, the rights and responsibilities of tutors and learners.

Group learning plans

A group learning plan (GLP) may be useful in an integrated literacies group where the learners' first priority is not explicitly literacies learning (for example, a family learning group or a workplace training course).

Negotiating a GLP will be part of a process:

- The aims, curriculum and activities of the group might first be negotiated.
- The literacies associated with the proposed group activities could be identified and agreed by the learners and the tutor.

- The group could negotiate the areas that they would like to do some work on and agree strategies for how they will do this.
- Over time individual literacies goals may be identified and worked on.
- By the end of the learning programme, individuals may have arrived at the point of developing their own literacies goals and be willing and able to express them in an ILP.

Planning of individual or group learning goals – getting it right

These questions will help you to think through your approaches to planning goals:

- Do learning plans include measurable goals?
- Do learning plans include notes about the learner's purpose for learning?
- Do learning plans suggest some appropriate learning and teaching methods?
- Do learning plans include milestones or indicators to show learning has taken place?

c) Learning, teaching and formative assessment

The aims of effective learning and teaching

Tutors should always encourage learners to think about **how** they learn. This can start in a small way, with learners thinking about what works when they are trying to remember a spelling, or how they go about doing a particular calculation.

Learners may find that simply discussing with others what their strategies are can encourage them to try out new ways of learning. Tutors should work with learners to find out what their existing capabilities are and then build on these.

It is important to encourage learners to think about what they need to know, and what they need to be able to do. For example, if the task a learner wants to undertake is to write texts and emails, then the first step is to examine why, to whom, and in what contexts they need to send texts and emails. Once this is clear then the tutor can move on to decide on a learning activity that will allow the learner to practise the skills associated with writing texts and emails.

Effective learning involves not only acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding, but also their **active application**.

Learners should be encouraged to think about how the knowledge learned in one context can be transferred to a new context. For example, they might consider together how what they have learned about budgeting at home could be applied to budgeting for their local community organisation.

Learners should be encouraged to see themselves as people who construct knowledge themselves rather than relying on 'expert' teachers. Designing a learning environment that is knowledge-centred involves creating learning opportunities that focus on the development and practice of skills that learners want, so they can carry out activities and achieve their goals. It also involves learners working collaboratively to identify and solve problems together, since this takes the focus from individual expertise to something that is shared. Communication and shared problem solving bridge the gap between old and new knowledge, and between the different understandings of partners (tutor, learner, peers) as individuals search for the common ground of shared understanding.

Tutor assistants and group tutors can gain more insight and experience of learning and teaching approaches in relation to adult literacies through the SQA qualifications PDA: Supporting Adult

Literacies Learning at SCQF level 6¹⁷ and PDA: Tutoring Adult Literacies at SCQF level 8¹⁸.

For more on professional development for adult literacies workers, see Section C below.

Learning resources

What can be used as a resource?

There are no limits to what can be used as a resource for learning and it is important to think imaginatively about what is available. All resources need to be approached critically and considered in their context.

Resources should include visual (using photographs, colours, mind mapping, videos), kinaesthetic (drawing/modelling, concrete resources, role playing), and auditory (video, speakers, discussion, CDs), so that a range of learning preferences can be catered for — and this applies for concrete resources as well as those online.

Where necessary, resources should be adapted to accommodate learners who have visual or auditory impairment, and/or physical or learning disabilities, for example by installing a hearing loop, using voice software, text enlargement, speaking scales or offering sign language support.

¹⁷ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/65433.html

¹⁸ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64695.html

Resources for learning and teaching should also include accommodation which should be fully accessible, suitable for adults and young people, and be of a standard which will contribute to the learner's feelings of self-worth.

The National Improvement Hub launched in March 2016 is intended to become a key gateway to educational improvement resources and support. It provides easy access to practice examples and other digital resources¹⁹.

Choosing resources

Developing the learning programme is a joint activity between learner and tutor; so too is the selection of resources.

Tutors should always encourage learners to bring along the texts, forms, calculations and tasks that they want to tackle for themselves. Sometimes the tutor can provide or organise resources like voice recorders, computers, and flipcharts. Often the most useful resources will be a person or a facility outside the usual learning environment.

Between them the tutor and learner can collect resources which:

- reflect the learner's own uses of literacies;
- are relevant to the learner's interests;
- are appropriate to age and skill level;
- promote respect for diversity and difference;
- promote self-determination;
- use a variety of learning media; and
- are well-produced.

Once the resources have been selected, the tutor can encourage the learner to reflect on each item chosen and used, to express an opinion about the resource, and to use this knowledge when choosing new resources to work with. Together, learners and tutors can build up a bank of questions to consider when discussing resources. Some starting points might be:

- How does this resource relate to my learning goal?
- Did I come away from it understanding more?
- What did I like/not like about it?
- Why is it like this?
- Did it reflect my experience?
- What would make it a better resource?
- Would I recommend it to others?

The internet provides an ever-growing wealth of resources. Tutors should be ready to adapt resources and to make the level appropriate for individual learners.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is an integral part of effective learning and teaching. It involves asking questions and checking learning on an ongoing basis to help learners and tutors to monitor learning progress. All learners and tutors should be involved in this kind of assessment. Results are needed quickly in order to be useful, and they must be detailed enough to help tutors and learners plan teaching to meet individual learner needs. Formative assessment must be based closely on the learner's identified goals or outcomes.

The concept of **Assessment for Learning** emphasises the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment. Assessment continually shapes the teaching and learning, and both teacher and learner are involved in the process throughout. The concept has been developed in schools, and has direct relevance to adult literacies and adult learning.

¹⁹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement>

Education Scotland has collated and presented guidance based on research findings into assessment. You can read more on the Journey to Excellence website²⁰.

Learning, teaching and formative assessment – getting it right

These questions will help you to think through your approaches to learning, teaching and formative assessment:

- Have you chosen teaching methods that suit the learning outcomes?
- Are you using a range of learning activities?
- Are you selecting and using high-quality, adult-appropriate learning resources that frame literacies as social practices?
- Are you using technologies to deliver, reinforce, complement or extend learning?
- Are you assessing learning on an ongoing basis and checking that learners can apply their learning in a range of contexts/situations?
- Are you encouraging learners to think critically about how they learn and to reflect on this?

Reflecting on learning, and summative assessment

At key points, possibly at the end of a learning topic or project, or at regular intervals in the calendar, learners and tutors should recognise learning that has been achieved to date. This assessment can be formal and involve certification or accreditation.

Assessment for summative purposes is intended to show that learners have met their learning goals, or completed a course of study and reached a certain standard of performance. Where the learner and tutor have been regularly reviewing progress against the learning goals, summative assessment will normally be a natural conclusion of the learning process, rather than a separate 'event'. The learner and tutor will agree – based on work produced by the learner – that the learning goals have been met.

Accreditation is an external way of recognising learning and brings some benefits:

- It is official recognition of learning.
- It can be used to demonstrate achievement to others, including employers.
- It is understood and respected by others such as other learning providers and employers.
- It is related to a standard that might be required for legal purposes.

Accreditation might not be a learner's main goal, but opportunities for accreditation should be offered to all learners, where possible and appropriate. This requires tutors to be aware of what accreditation is available for learners and to share this information with them so that they can make decisions about what is appropriate for them.

Even where the learner is aiming for accreditation, summative assessment may simply be a process in which the tutor reviews a portfolio of work produced by the learner to confirm that it meets the required standard. This would be the case for Core Skills Communication assessment, for example.

Reflecting on learning, and summative assessment – getting it right

These questions will help you to think through your approaches to reflection and summative assessment:

- Are you holding regular reviews of learning progress?
- Are you recognising learning in an appropriate way (for example, through accreditation or certification)?
- Are you involving the learner in reflection and assessment activities?

²⁰ www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/resourcesandcpd/research/summaries/rsassessment.asp

d) Reviewing learning goals and evaluation

Following summative assessment, or at any appropriate point in a course of learning, the learner and tutor should review learning goals and decide:

- What does the learner want to look at again?
- What does the learner want to learn more of?
- What else does the learner want to learn?
- In what ways might the learning change (for example, in mode, pace, level)?

As well as reviewing learning goals, learners and tutors should also assess the quality or **value** of the learning programme.

Evaluation is the process of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process or programme. All who are involved in the process or programme – learners, tutors, managers, workplace stakeholders (as appropriate) – should play a part in the evaluation. It may be a relatively informal process that has the aim of helping tutors and learners to identify how they might improve the process or programme next time. In this case, there should always be an opportunity for learners to comment on how they felt about the programme and how it helped them to achieve their goals.

It can also be more formal, for example, when information on learners, their learning hours and the learning outcomes need to be submitted, for example to a funding body or employer. Where evaluation is to meet the requirements of public accountability, an impartial (possibly external) evaluation of the programme as a whole might be required. Judgements must follow agreed and consistent criteria, and must allow aggregation of results for reporting purposes. This form of assessment does not need to be done frequently, and there is no need for quick results. Nor do all learners need to take part – a properly drawn representative sample will suffice.

Reviewing learning goals and evaluation – getting it right

These questions will help you to think through your approaches to reviewing learning goals and evaluation:

- Are learners supported to identify further learning goals?
- Are learners able to provide feedback about the learning provision?

Accreditation

There are a number of learning and skills frameworks that have relevance for adult literacies learners and learning, particularly with regard to shaping learning programmes and for summative assessment (see section (d) of the Learning Cycle above).

Core Skills

Core Skills²¹ are SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) National Units that can be undertaken by learners as individual qualifications, or that can be embedded within other qualifications. There are five Core Skills, at SCQF²² (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) levels 2 to 6:

- Numeracy
- Communication
- ICT
- Working With Others
- Problem Solving.

Core Skills are context free and are therefore flexible and responsive to individual and group needs and interests. There are smaller units at SCQF levels 2 and 3 in Core Skills Communication and Numeracy that enable learners to achieve and gain certificates for

²¹ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/37801.html

²² www.scqf.org.uk/the-framework/

smaller steps in learning. There is no external test involved in gaining Core Skills and they are internally assessed by the awarding centre.

In addition, Workplace Core Skill Units are available at SCQF levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 for learners in workplaces, for example on Modern Apprenticeships or union learning programmes.

National Units and National Qualifications (NQs)

National Qualifications are the SQA qualifications linked to Curriculum for Excellence, specifically to the Skills for Learning Life and Work (SfLLW) framework²³. SfLLW consists of five broad areas:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Health and wellbeing
- Employability, enterprise and citizenship
- Thinking skills.

National Units in literacy and numeracy are derived from this framework and are available at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5²⁴. These units embed and automatically certificate Core Skills in communication and numeracy (respectively) at those levels. This means that if, for example, a learner achieves National Literacy Unit at SCQF level 4, their Core Skills Profile will show that they have achieved Core Skills Communication at SCQF level 4.

Essential Skills

Essential Skills, which were identified in the Scottish Government's 2007 Skills Strategy, consist of a broad range of skills (including Core Skills and skills that form SfLLW) that are relevant to employability and work. Essential skills include:

- Personal and learning skills that enable individuals to become effective lifelong learners.
- Literacy and numeracy.
- The five Core Skills of communication, numeracy, problem solving, information technology, and working with others.
- Employability skills that prepare individuals for employment rather than for a specific occupation.
- Vocational skills that are specific to a particular occupation or sector.

SQA have identified on their website²⁵ ways in which the qualifications they offer learners can help to develop these Essential Skills. In addition there are Essential Skills Units available for learners.

Other relevant awards

Adult Achievement Awards²⁶ enable adult learners to achieve a recognised qualification at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 6. The awards were developed by Newbattle Abbey College in partnership with Education Scotland

and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP). Adults receive accreditation for the learning they have undertaken in a range of places – the community, colleges, voluntary organisations, employment, and volunteering. Learners produce portfolios which demonstrate their learning and achievement, and these are assessed by Newbattle Abbey College, which owns the awards.

SQA Personal Achievement Awards²⁷ enable learners to develop their confidence and independence, and their ability to communicate and respond to others in their own way. The qualifications are available at SCQF levels 1 and 2.

SQA Personal Development Awards²⁸ aim to help learners become more independent and to develop their potential as contributing members of their societies. Learners will develop self-reliance, self-esteem and confidence through supported and independent learning. Personal Development Awards are available at SCQF levels 2 to 6, and will replace the existing National Courses in Personal Development.

Youth Awards²⁹ provide an opportunity for young adult learners to achieve. Some awards are not limited by age so are suitable for all adult learners.

²³ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63090.3674.html

²⁴ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/58991.3651.html

²⁵ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/75022.6429.html

²⁶ www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/adult-achievement-awards/

²⁷ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57037.html

²⁸ www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57039.html

²⁹ www.awardsnetwork.org/index.php

Modes of learning

Adult literacies learning is provided through different 'modes' or delivery approaches. Often the mode depends on the settings and the needs of the learners.

Dedicated and integrated literacies learning

Dedicated literacies provision focuses explicitly on literacies learning goals. Taking learners' own uses and contexts for literacies as a starting point, learners and tutors negotiate the learning programme. Learners have ILPs (and/or GLPs), and record and evaluate their work regularly.

Examples of dedicated provision include:

- Community-based roll-on-roll-off groups or study groups where the learners discuss and agree individual and group learning goals with the tutor to enable them to gain skills, knowledge and understanding numeracy, in reading, writing, listening, and talking.
- Short courses for learners such as *Looking at everyday numbers*, *Improve your reading*, or *Writing emails*.
- A group of learners taking an SQA Core Skills Unit.
- One-to-one support in a college.

- Drop-in provision for learners who may not be able to access regular groups or who may wish to make use of additional learning opportunities.
- Workplace groups focusing on particular work-related literacies tasks.

Integrated literacies learning has outcomes relating to literacies that are combined with another subject or focus which is the learner's primary concern; for example, in a youth group setting, or a group learning about healthy eating, computing, local history or parenting. There should be a clear indication of the literacies tasks to be tackled. These might include writing and laying out a local history webpage, or working out measures for menus.

Integrated literacies programmes are a useful way of attracting new learners into literacies learning, and of providing a way forward for those who need to move on from dedicated literacies.

Tutors offering integrated literacies learning need to be confident both in the subject matter of the course and in ways of introducing

the skills, knowledge and understanding of literacies into it. They could also seek to co-tutor with a 'subject' specialist.

The role of tutor assistants

Many adult literacies providers employ tutor assistants, usually in volunteer roles. Tutor assistants can work with an individual learner or small groups of learners within a group setting. They are supported by group tutors and can make a positive impact, especially with learners who are new, or who need more support with tasks than other learners³⁰.

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³⁰ For more information about typical roles in adult literacies learning provision, see Section C below.

Co-tutoring

Here a literacies tutor works with a subject tutor (say for social care, construction, or catering), tutoring in the group together. This allows for individual coaching and support within the group. Tutors involved in this approach need to:

- appreciate each other's ethos and approaches;
- have agreed the aims of the group and how they will work together;
- be offered joint preparation and liaison time; and
- have discussed the ownership of the group and the paperwork involved.

This model works well in integrated literacies and can be used in all settings, including colleges. However, there is a risk that learners perceive literacies as something set apart and the province of the 'numeracy or spelling expert'.

Drop-ins

Where larger learning centres want to offer integrated literacies but do not have staff skilled in both the subject and in literacies support, this can be addressed by establishing drop-ins alongside the main subject provision. Either the learner or the tutor can 'drop in'.

Many colleges operate literacies support from well-resourced learning centres. Learners may refer themselves, or be referred for one session or many. Expert tuition will be available but it relies on strong learner motivation to seek out the support.

Group learning

Effective adult literacies learning should relate to individual goals, but we also know that adults learn from others when working in groups. Drawing up ground rules with a group of learners can promote mutual respect and support.

There are advantages of learning in a group:

a) Groups provide a supportive environment for learning

When people work together on a shared task it provides encouragement to everyone, and the atmosphere can enhance the learners' self-image and encourage them to greater effort. The sense of solidarity created can provide the security necessary to take risks and experiment in a safe environment, helping to overcome individual anxieties and generate confidence.

b) Groups provide a challenge for learners

The group can bring out views, prejudices and experiences to be discussed and challenged. It can provide opportunities for change, for increased awareness and critical reflection, which can help learners to become more conscious of, and more effective in, their learning.

c) A group can provide resources to build richer and more complex structures for learning

The group can draw upon the variety of experiences and resources of its members, and so present a wider range of possible solutions to problems. Methods available in the teaching-learning process are greatly multiplied by the range of participants. The resources that the learner and the tutor can call upon are greatly increased by the existence of the group.

d) The group dynamic

The group has a life and momentum of its own. It creates and maintains motivation, helps retention, and sets a pace of learning that is satisfying to most of its members. Loyalty to the group will often bring about greater effort at particular times than any demand the tutor can make.

In literacies groups, the tutor may wish to organise the work differently according to whether the group's or the individual's plan dominates. Quite often groups will be structured to meet the needs of groups and individuals, with sub-groups of, for example, two or three learners working on a task together, while other learners work on individual priorities — nevertheless, there is a coherence in

the group and all learners feel part of it. Where the group activity is the priority, this could come first, with individuals and pairs working on their own goals in the second half of a session.

If the group activity generates the individuals' learning tasks, the tutor needs a good collection of resources and the ability to select from them quickly and confidently.

Individual learning within a group setting

Where learners have not yet bonded round an issue, or where new group members need to be integrated, the tutor may choose to work with individuals for the first half of the session and then bring the group together for a group activity at the end. With this model the tutor will have to prepare individual work as negotiated at the previous session.

In both models, a refreshment break is useful not only for social interaction and resource-browsing, but also for a concentration break. Where refreshments are not free, collecting and recording payment can be used as a learning activity.

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Section B: Settings and themes

Settings

Throughout Scotland literacies learning is delivered by organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors. These organisations often work in partnership to develop and deliver opportunities in their specific contexts and settings. Literacies learning is delivered by local authority community learning services, voluntary organisations, youth organisations, prisons, colleges, unions, employers, and independent training providers. It takes place in a range of settings, including community centres, libraries, colleges, prison learning centres, and workplaces.

Literacies provision is diverse, with providers in rural and remote settings often having different approaches to working with learners. For example, in rural settings, one-to-one tuition is often widespread.

In addition, learners themselves are diverse, with unique interests, aspirations and needs, and provision should be adaptable and responsive to any learner who comes through the door.

Learners in one setting will have similar and different learning needs to those in other settings. It is therefore particularly important to carry out thorough, personalised initial assessments with learners, which lead to the planning of measurable goals.

Themes

ALIS 2020 focuses on the themes of literacies for employability and work, literacies and financial capability, literacies and families, and literacies and health. It also draws particular attention to literacies learning for particular groups: for example, for offenders and ex-offenders, for people with specific learning difficulties, and for learners whose first language is not English.

Literacies, employability and work

Literacies capabilities are fundamental to working life and for supporting people to work towards, to move into, or back into, the labour market. Individuals who undertake literacies learning in the workplace gain confidence in their abilities, which may help them to sustain existing employment, apply for promotion, take up further learning opportunities, and to participate in workplace activities.

An ALIS 2020 Working Group³¹ defined literacies for employability and the workplace as:

'... the reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy capabilities needed to handle information, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, in order to work towards, gain, keep or progress in paid or unpaid work.'

Providing literacies learning in the workplace involves working with employers and other stakeholders, including employees, learning and development staff, and union representatives. The learning programme should be flexible take into account the needs of all stakeholders, be responsive to their feedback and be continuously reviewed.

Activities include promoting the benefits of literacies learning, gaining commitment from all stakeholders, and ensuring that the learning is contextualised for the specific workplace setting. Literacies learning can be integrated into other workplace training, for example, filling in timesheets, health and safety, employee induction, computer skills, and Care Sector SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications).

³¹ www.employabilityinscotland.com/barriers/skills/adult-literacies

In addition, literacies work can have an important role in preparing people for the workplace, helping them to become ‘work ready’, or in pre-employment activity such as Activity Agreements³².

Literacies and financial capability

Literacies skills, knowledge and understanding underpin financial capability.

Financial capability work embedded in, or partnering, literacies support can help adults develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to manage their money effectively through everyday financial activities, such as reading and understanding written and numerical information and filling in forms. It can also help them to understand how products and services work, and what their consumer rights are. In addition, strong literacies capabilities are needed to identify and challenge errors in bills, compare prices and to seek advice when a person finds themselves in debt. Many of the individuals and groups for whom financial capability can have a significant impact may also be those in need of a range of other literacies support.

At the same time, the use of money is an important social practice that most adults engage in; therefore, literacies learning that uses the context of money can make learners’ learning meaningful and ensure it is rooted in real, everyday life.

Literacies work can effectively meet learners’ financial capability needs where:

- The use of money is available as a context that tutors employ so that learners can understand and apply new skills (for example, understanding decimals in the context of pounds and pence).
- Learning materials reflect the real world of money, with bank and credit union forms available in the learning centre and websites (such as price comparison websites, or **www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk**) integrated into learning sessions.
- The learning centre has a relationship with the local credit union, Citizens Advice Bureau, or money advice centre so that: sessions can be delivered by experts tailored to learners’ needs and interests, and learners can be referred for advice and guidance from money professionals.

- Tutors and learners recognise the boundaries between learning and financial advice. Many tutors have found that using case studies about fictional individuals or families, for example the Skint!³³ resource, can help to de-personalise learning about money.

Education Scotland’s website provides guidance on teaching about money within its National Numeracy Progression Framework³⁴. This guidance is aimed at teachers delivering Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes.

Literacies and family learning

We know that a child’s parent or carer has a central role to play in their learning and development. Family learning contributes to equality of opportunity by changing learning patterns within families. Working with the family together, rather than with the child or the adult separately, can often make a greater impact on the literacies development of both child and parent or carer. This can be achieved by combining early childhood interventions and early parenting strategies with adult literacies work. An example of one such successful project is Learn with Fred³⁵, which took place in Dundee.

³² Activity Agreements are for those young people who may not, without additional support, make a successful transition to work, further education or training.

³³ www.scottishbooktrust.com/learning/adult-learners/skint

³⁴ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/n/nationalnumeracyprogressionframework/index.asp

³⁵ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/gettinginvolved/sharingideas/learnwithfred.asp

Additionally, parents and carers who develop their own literacies often gain the confidence and skills to help their children with numeracy, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Literacies and health

We know from ALIS 2020 that adults with lower literacies capabilities are also more likely to have health problems, including mental health issues, problems with sight, speech, hearing and learning, as well as other disabilities or health problems lasting more than six months.

Literacies improvement and health goals have a better chance of success when pursued together. Partnerships between adult literacies providers and health care providers can make a difference to the lives of adults and young people who have physical and mental health issues.

Offenders and ex-offenders

ALIS 2020 points out that the literacies needs of offenders and ex-offenders are disproportionately higher than the rest of the adult population. Supporting and encouraging individuals to improve their literacies capabilities can have a profound impact on their ability to

re-integrate into society and their families, and can improve the likelihood of their becoming economically active. See Education Scotland's website³⁶ to find out more about offender learning.

Specific learning difficulties

Specific learning difficulties are a range of neuro-developmental conditions that affect the individual's abilities to learn in everyday contexts by traditional methods. These conditions are distinct from global learning difficulties in that difficulties arise not from intellectual impairment but rather from particular processing differences and, typically, there will be a discrepancy between the individual's general cognitive abilities and their abilities in certain areas of learning (such as written language or number skills) or under certain circumstances.

Many people have difficulties in fully grasping the skills of efficient reading, writing and using numbers because of a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia, or a number of linked conditions.

However, their difficulties (with literacy and numeracy) may go unrecognised in day-to-

day life because they are otherwise very capable, intellectually able and articulate. Very often, people with specific learning difficulties can cope reasonably well with literacy and numeracy tasks in ideal situations, but in other circumstances, time pressure, stress, fatigue or even environmental factors, such as lighting, noise or unfamiliar settings, can seriously impair their abilities.

To learn more about specific learning difficulties and their impact on learning, including literacies learning, see resources on the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) website³⁷.

Also, see information provided by Education Scotland about additional support for learning³⁸.

English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)

It is important to recognise that literacies learning is not solely concerned with meeting the needs of monolingual speakers of English. Some adults whose first language is not English may have reading, writing and number difficulties very similar to those encountered by 'traditional' literacies learners, due to limited schooling in their first language or because they

³⁶ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/practice/offenderlearning/introduction.asp

³⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/spld-adults-inclusion-and-intervention>

³⁸ <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inclusionandequalities/additionalsupportforlearning/index.asp>

come from a mainly oral culture, or because they have a specific learning difficulty.

It is important to support people whose first language is not English to become active citizens. These adults can make an important contribution to the economic success of Scotland, but to do so they must be able to read, write, speak, understand English, and use numbers in English in a different cultural context.

The **refreshed strategy** for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) sets out the importance and context of ESOL learning in Scotland, and provides case studies of different types of provision.

Young people

Work with young people can have a number of aims, including improving young people's life chances through learning that they missed out on earlier in their lives. Dedicated youth literacies learning provision exists in Scotland, as do opportunities for young people to improve their capabilities through a range of activities where literacies learning is not the main focus, for example in youth groups. Youth workers might not be specialists in literacies learning

and teaching (for children and young people in school, or for adult learners), but they can take advantage of training that will enable them to effectively support the literacies development of the young people they work with. A resource used in such training is the Big Book of Literacies Training³⁹, developed by Education Scotland.

Scots and Gaelic

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in Gaelic and Scots language learning.

Language learning is distinct from literacy in its purposes and approaches to learning. However, many individuals who have grown up speaking Scots or Gaelic in the family home do not consider themselves literate in those languages: they feel excluded from Gaelic and Scots-speaking communities because they struggle to read the languages and to write them with confidence. This is often because, in spite of oral fluency, they have never had the opportunity to learn spelling and grammar rules.

Many of these people would welcome the chance to improve their literacy, rather than their linguistic skills, in Gaelic or Scots.

Learning, teaching and assessment of Scots or Gaelic literacy would not differ in terms of teaching methods and approaches from those used in English literacy; however, the tutor would need to be skilled and literate in those languages and would need to have access to high quality, adult-appropriate resources.

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³⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/big-book-literacies-training-bblt>

Section C: Developing your professional practice

OECD (2008) research on teaching, learning and assessment for adults highlighted the complex skills and qualities required of adult literacies practitioners:

‘Instructors need strong subject-matter and pedagogical expertise and skills in assessment, as well as softer skills, such as humour, patience, flexibility, and empathy.’

Scotland’s adult literacies workforce is characterised by mostly sessional, part-time and temporary contracts, although permanent posts exist. Workers often have complex roles, co-ordinating learning provision as well as tutoring.

Practitioners support learning in contexts of varying formality: from a community setting where learning can focus on the need to improve literacies for a specific purpose in the learner’s life such as helping a child with their homework, to a more formal setting, such as a college or independent training environment, where learners are undertaking a vocational qualification and need additional support.

Some practitioners work with individuals who face barriers such as poor physical and mental health, or work and caring commitments.

This can often mean that learners move in and out of programmes intermittently as their circumstances change.

In other cases, practitioners may be supporting learners who are difficult to engage or challenging to motivate: such as those learners who are required to undertake literacies learning as part of a back-to-work programme or community payback order.

In order to meet the professional development needs of this diverse workforce (and thereby meet the needs and aspirations of literacies learners), we recognise the complex nature of the work and the specific challenges involved in providing opportunities for practitioners to develop their own skills.

A professional development framework for Scotland’s adult literacies workforce⁴⁰ (the ALPDF) sets out three ‘typical’ roles that practitioners occupy (recognising that they will often occupy more than one of these roles at any given time). The three roles are:

- tutor assistant;
- group tutor; and
- co-ordinator.

The ALPDF suggests relevant professional development opportunities (formal and informal) for each of the three roles, so that practitioners and their employers can identify and prioritise professional development opportunities.

The ALPDF aims to enable practitioners to progress within and beyond adult literacies work.

In addition, the Community Learning and Development Standards Council’s Code of Ethics⁴¹ provides guidance that is applicable to adult literacies work, in order to ensure the work with individuals and communities is ethical and inclusive.

Education Scotland provides guidance on equality and inclusion in education⁴², with an emphasis on a ‘holistic approach’.

⁴⁰ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/AdultLiteraciesCPDFramework_tcm4-744576.pdf

⁴¹ http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/?page_id=320

⁴² www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inclusionandequalities/equalities/index.asp

Annex A: Policy context

Principal policies relating to adult literacies outcomes in Scotland

Adult Learning in Scotland: a Statement of Ambition

In 2014 Education Scotland launched Adult Learning in Scotland, a Statement of Ambition (the Statement of Ambition)⁴³.

The Statement of Ambition has three core principles — that adult learning should be: lifelong, life-wide, and learner-centred. It recognises the key and distinctive role that adult learning plays in helping to develop the person, the family, communities and society. It aims for:

- Scotland to become recognised globally as the most creative and engaged learning society.
- Every adult in Scotland to have the right to access learning to meet their educational needs and their aspirations.
- Adult learning in Scotland, and the outcomes that learners achieve, to be world-leading.

The strategic forum that developed the Statement of Ambition is now tasked with overseeing the realisation of these aims. Four working groups, chaired by members of the forum, will bring the aims to fruition. They focus on:

- professional learning;
- family learning;
- access and participation; and
- the learner voice.

The Statement of Ambition aligns with principles that underpin adult literacies work in Scotland, in placing the learner at the centre, in promoting self-determination throughout life, and in taking account of learning contexts that are ‘life-wide’.

ALIS 2020 and the Literacy Action Plan

Scotland’s adult literacies policy, ALIS 2020, was launched in December 2010. It offers a vision that:

By 2020 Scotland’s society and economy will be stronger because more of its adults are able to read, write and use numbers effectively in order to handle information, communicate with others, express ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, as family members, workers, citizens and lifelong learners.

The guidance sets out four outcomes for achieving this vision, on the themes of:

- a) increasing engagement and access
- b) ensuring a high quality learning experience
- c) supporting coherent national and local infrastructures, and
- d) measuring impact.

⁴³ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/statementofambition.asp

The second of these outcomes, that adult literacies learners receive high quality learning and teaching so they can achieve their goals, places a requirement on practitioners and their employers to be skilled and confident at delivering literacies learning, and at developing literacies learning programmes that meet the needs of the communities they serve.

ALIS 2020 builds on both ALNIS (2001)⁴⁴ and the Literacy Action Plan (2010)⁴⁵.

The themes within ALIS 2020 can support the design of individualised curricula by reminding tutors and learners about the relevance of literacies capabilities for employability and work, for their children's achievements, for their handling of money, and for their health and wellbeing.

Policies that relate to the delivery of adult literacies outcomes in Scotland

The following policies relate either to the broader field of adult learning or to aspects of adult learning in Scotland. The European policy provides an international context for adult literacies. This is important in that adult literacies outcomes are often used as benchmarks for success at national level, in studies such as PISA⁴⁶ and PIAAC⁴⁷.

Community Learning and Development Strategic Guidance and Regulations

The Scottish Government published Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships: Community Learning and Development⁴⁸ in 2012.

This guidance provides a clear statement that the purpose of CLD is to empower people, individually and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities through learning.

The guidance is addressed to Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). However, it has much wider relevance and is for all those involved in planning, managing or delivering CLD services or using a CLD approach to support individuals and communities. It describes how CLD delivers government policy outcomes in communities, and clarifies the Scottish Government's expectations of CPPs and other public sector partners for how CLD services should be delivered. It also re-emphasises the Government's commitment to CLD's aims and describes how these will be part of an overall strategic approach to be taken forward by a range of partners including Government itself, Education Scotland and the CLD Standards Council for Scotland⁴⁹.

The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013⁵⁰ (the CLD Regulations) came into force on 1st September 2013.

The CLD Regulations place a requirement on the local authority to initiate, maintain and facilitate a process which ensures that CLD in the area of the local authority is secured in such a way that it:

- identifies target individuals and groups;
- considers the needs of those target individuals and groups for CLD;
- assesses the degree to which those needs are already being met; and
- identifies barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of relevant CLD.

In meeting this requirement, the local authority must involve and consult representatives of both the target individuals and groups and CLD providers within the area of the local authority.

The local authority must also consult on, and publish, specified information every three years. The first of these plans had to be in place no later than 1st September 2015, with subsequent plans published at three-yearly intervals from the initial date of publication.

⁴⁴ www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/158952/0043191.pdf

⁴⁵ www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/27084039/0

⁴⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

⁴⁷ www.oecd.org/site/piaac/

⁴⁸ www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/06/2208

⁴⁹ <http://cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/>

⁵⁰ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/cldregulations/index.asp

Scotland's Adult ESOL Strategy 2015-2020

The Adult ESOL Strategy for Scotland⁵¹ aims to support Scotland's ambitions for growing the economy and to encourage active citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society. The strategy has been refreshed to take account of new and developing policy. It maintains the vision and principles of the 2007 strategy⁵² and recognises the achievements that have been made since then. It seeks to build on the achievements to date and to provide renewed strategic direction framed within the Adult Learning in Scotland: a Statement of Ambition⁵³.

Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence⁵⁴ (CfE) aims to transform education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum for learners from 3-18 years old. CfE is organised around four capacities – to enable each child or young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen, and an effective contributor. It draws schooling, learning in the community and out of school life in general more closely together.

One of CfE's reforms is that supporting the learning of literacy and numeracy, along with health and wellbeing, becomes the responsibility of all teachers of all subjects. The shared responsibility for supporting literacy and numeracy learning across education (including those who support learning outside schools, in youth clubs, volunteering programmes, colleges and universities) should not only improve learners' literacies capabilities, but also help to reduce the stigma some individuals feel from having difficulties with numeracy, reading, and/or writing.

CfE's 'Seven Principles of Curriculum Design' could be applied to the design of curricula for adult learners, in that learning should provide:

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance.

Skills for Scotland

Scotland's skills strategy is Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth⁵⁵ (2010). It sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to skills and training to help address Scotland's skills needs and to improve the nation's economic performance. It identifies overlapping clusters of skills including literacy and numeracy.

Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

In December 2014 the Scottish Government published Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy⁵⁶. The strategy aims to reduce youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. It is likely that adult literacies work with young people will contribute, through the ALIS 2020 theme of employability and work, to a reduction in youth unemployment.

⁵¹ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/esolstrategy.asp

⁵² www.gov.scot/Publications/2007/05/09155324/0

⁵³ www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/about/policy/statementofambition.asp

⁵⁴ www.oecd.org/education/school/Improving-Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective.pdf

⁵⁵ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7750>

⁵⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/12/7750>

Getting it Right for Every Child

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)⁵⁷ is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. It supports them and their parent(s) to work in partnership with the services that can help them.

GIRFEC ensures children and young people get consistent and effective support for their wellbeing wherever they live or learn; making good practice the national standard in Scotland.

Services and community organisations across Scotland use the GIRFEC approach to ensure the way they support children, young people and their parents is consistent and effective.

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⁵⁷ www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/what-is-girfec

Annex B: Educational theory relating to adult literacies

It is important to consider the theories of knowledge that underpin our understanding of how people learn so that we can teach and assess appropriately⁵⁸.

Behaviourism

Behaviourism is a theory that conceives of learning as a set of skills such as recognising and reproducing letters, signs and symbols that are acquired through the tutor or others in society reinforcing the approved responses. These theories tend to see the learner as relatively passive and there is an assumption that the repetition of skills will aid learning.

This approach is particularly common in the teaching of numeracy where it is assumed that learners will understand the four operations (+, −, x, ÷) by doing many examples of similar calculations.

This theory makes a strong distinction between right and wrong answers and assumes that knowledge exists independently of the tutor and learner.

Few tutors nowadays consciously use behaviourist theories. However, aspects

of behaviourism still have an influence on teaching practices (Bruner, 1986), for example, reinforcing a skill by lots of repetitive practice through worksheets.

Constructivism

Constructivism, on the other hand, is a theory that sees learning as an active process of gaining understanding in which learners use their prior knowledge and experience to shape meaning and acquire new knowledge (Glaser, 1992). It is based on research related to the development of expertise in thinking.

This approach emphasises that human beings are active problem solvers who learn in order to make sense of the world around them. People explore, solve problems and remember. Learning activities are undertaken not just as ends in themselves but as a means of achieving larger objectives and goals that have meaning in the wider communities that the learner is part of. This means that knowledge emerges out of

the problem solving activities that the learner engages in.

The learner has a central role in interpreting what is being taught in ways that are meaningful in his or her own context, rather than depending on the 'expert' tutor as the sole source of knowledge. For example, learners have tacit knowledge of how they learn to do new things gained from experience of doing a particular task such as taking money out of a cash machine or finding their way around a new area.

Tutors need to help learners think about what strategies they use in this kind of learning and how they can transfer these strategies to other kinds of numeracy or literacy tasks.

Active learning also emphasises the importance of transferring the learning that takes place in the learning programme to the learner's everyday life. If this doesn't happen, literacy and numeracy learning becomes divorced from these broader purposes and does not have real meaning for learners (Daniels, 2001).

⁵⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/adult-literacy-and-numeracy-curriculum-framework-scotland>

This theory also shows how important it is for tutors to build on the prior knowledge of learners by helping them to identify what they already know about a particular topic (Gillespie, 2002a).

Tutors should understand fully the range of prior knowledge and experience that some learners might bring, including those from minority backgrounds who have faced prejudice and discrimination based on gender, race, age or disability or their capacity to learn. This existing knowledge can then be built on in order to help learners to achieve a more expert understanding. For example, in a family learning programme tutors can ask what parents already know about their children's education, directly build on this to identify gaps, and then address any misunderstandings.

Research shows that if tutors do not involve learners in naming and analysing their existing understandings, learners may not grasp new concepts, such as new ways of understanding maths, and revert to what they already know. This research also highlights the importance of developing learners' critical thinking and encouraging them to question their assumptions. If assumptions go unchallenged then misconceptions persist and learners get

stuck and find it difficult to move on to new knowledge and understanding (Gillespie, 2002b).

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies

The research literature also highlights the importance of a focus on cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Greeno et al, 1997). Learning strategies can be divided into two basic types. **Cognitive** strategies help us to remember and organise content information. For example, when we read we might apply a cognitive strategy to skim the title, pictures, and headings of a text to get the gist of what we will read. We might take notes to help us remember the main points. An expert reader will also know when it is possible to skip over sections of a text and when it is important to read every word carefully. When learning a large number of facts, a good strategic learner will 'study smarter' by working to understand the 'big picture' and then dividing the facts into categories through a classification scheme, diagram or outline, for example mind maps (Gillespie and Nash, 2002).

Metacognitive strategies consist of knowledge about one's own thinking processes. They are the 'executive managers' of knowledge and involve planning, monitoring, evaluating and revising one's own thinking processes. Good metacognitive strategy users engage in an ongoing process of identifying what their prior knowledge of a topic is, what they don't know, and what they need to learn. Metacognitive strategies enable learners to plan and self-regulate their work and to judge under what conditions to apply which cognitive strategies.

Tutors can help learners to learn these skills by enabling them, firstly, to examine their prior knowledge and to construct new knowledge in the light of their past experiences through reflecting on the knowledge, skills and learning strategies that they use to complete a particular task. Secondly, tutors can ask learners to think about how this specific learning might transfer to other parts of their lives and to use this information and their thinking processes to monitor, develop and alter their understanding. Finally, tutors can help learners to identify what barriers they feel interfere with their learning and revise their assumptions about these in the light of their own growing independence.

There are three kinds of **metacognitive knowledge**: which strategies are relevant, how to apply the right strategy and why these strategies are useful. This means that when someone is acquiring a new skill the tutor needs to break the complex task down into smaller steps, help the learner to see how to do each one, and then show how to put the individual pieces back together again. Tutors should be aware of how to explain the individual parts of any activity, should understand how to stimulate the learner's thinking about the problem, and know how to explain the processes of thinking at the level the learner can understand and employ.

Scaffolding

Another key concept is that of '**scaffolding**' (Vygotsky, 1986):

The role of the tutor is, through guided participation, to build bridges from the learner's present understanding and skills to reach a new level of knowledge. This collaborative process moves the learner along the developmental continuum from novice towards expert. Scaffolding helps to do this by providing tasks that are slightly above the learner's level of independent functioning yet can be accomplished with sensitive guidance.

In the process of jointly performing a task, a tutor or more skilled peer can point out links between the task and the ones the learner already knows, helping the learner to stretch his or her understanding to the next development level. The tutor's role is to first structure the task and the learning environment so that the demands on the learner are at an appropriately challenging level. Then the role is to continually adjust the amount of intervention and the range of tasks to the learner's level of independence and fluency.

The idea of scaffolding is a key one and to be effective it should be based on practices that:

- give ownership of the activity to be learned to the learner;
- are appropriate to the learner's current knowledge;
- provide a structure that embodies a 'natural' sequence of thought and action;
- result in collaboration between tutor and learner; and
- result in internalisation via the gradual withdrawal of the scaffolding and the transfer of control.

The tutor is always a member of the learning community and so should make it clear that he or she is also a learner and that learning is a shared responsibility.

Learning is not just about cognitive development; it is also about values and feelings and so the **emotional and social dimensions** are equally important (Illeris, 2004). Because literacy and numeracy skills have assumed enormous significance in contemporary Western society the discourse surrounding adult literacies tends to focus on what people lack rather than what they have, and emphasises their deficits not their strengths. Learners internalise this emphasis on individual failure rather than thinking about the circumstances and structures that might make learning difficult.

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This means that many learners have low self-esteem and may be unwilling to take the risk of learning in new ways (Crowther et al, 2001). At school they may have used the strategy of not trying new ways of learning because they were afraid of failing. Sticking to what they knew may have seemed safer even if their old ways were of little help. People learn early on at school that failure is to be avoided and so may simply withdraw rather than show that they do not understand something.

This is why it is important that tutors work with learners to draw on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding as this emphasises strengths rather than weaknesses. This in turn leads to learners becoming more confident about what they know and can do and so better able to learn and grow in self-esteem (Beder, 1999). It is also important to recognise that barriers to learning may be erected not only by learners but also by tutors, barriers based often on unconscious stereotypes and assumptions about the contexts and capabilities of learners.

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Annex C: Glossary of terms

Literacies

The term 'literacies' is used to encompass not only the skills, but also the knowledge and critical understanding involved in using numbers, reading, writing, listening and talking. The plural term reflects the multiple and diverse ways in which we use literacy and numeracy in our everyday lives; in other words, the complex literacy and numeracy capabilities ('literacies') one person uses will differ from another's.

'Adult' literacies

The term 'adult' makes a distinction between the literacies learning that children and young people experience in school (in other words, in a more formal learning setting), and the less formal, and non-formal, style of learning that adults and young people can expect to experience if they return to learn to improve their capabilities. In this document, the term adult includes young people who are transitioning to adulthood (for example, leaving school, leaving care, starting work, or entering further learning). Often, non-formal learning provision that is tailored for young people is called youth literacies, and this might be delivered by adult literacies workers and/or by youth workers.

Curriculum

There are different understandings of the term 'curriculum', which can be understood as spanning a spectrum.

At one end of the spectrum, curriculum involves a detailed specification of content to be covered (or outcomes to be achieved) — similar to a syllabus or unit specification in a qualification. This is known as 'product' curriculum.

At the other end, a 'process' curriculum makes recommendations for the processes to be undertaken by learners and tutors to identify, plan, learn, assess and review individualised or group learning programmes.

These guidelines are strongly orientated towards a *process-based* concept of curriculum. The emphasis is on the way that the curriculum is negotiated with learners and builds creatively on their existing knowledge and skills and the contexts they experience in their private, family, community and working lives. The more open the curriculum, the easier it is to adapt it to learners' needs and learning goals. This approach has risks, too, in that flexibility can potentially make tutors and learners feel less secure about planning and progress — which

is why regular review of learning and revision of plans is crucial.

This document in itself is not a curriculum. It offers guidelines on processes and approaches that should be used by tutors and their learners to develop tailored curricula that suit the learning needs of individual learners or groups of learners.

Lifelong learning

Skills for Scotland⁵⁹ (2010), the Scottish Government's Skills Strategy, called on Scotland's learning providers to see themselves as part of a single lifelong learning system, in which the diverse needs of individuals, employers and communities are met by learning providers working together, recognising each other's contributions, and enabling learners to achieve and progress.

For the purposes of these guidelines, 'lifelong learning' is taken to mean the learning that takes place outside and/or beyond school. It includes learning that is delivered to varying degrees of formality and in a range of settings.

⁵⁹ www.gov.scot/Publications/2010/10/04125111/0

The social practice approach

Adult literacies learning and teaching in Scotland uses a 'social practice' approach, which recognises that the development of literacies depends on the contexts and activities in which learning occurs, the purposes of the learning, and the cultural patterns that are valued in communities and broader society. Adults will learn most effectively what they want or need to learn, and so the emphasis for the learning should be on the uses and application of literacies learning.

The social practice approach has at its heart the principle that literacies learning has complex relationships to social, emotional and personal values and practices. Learning programmes should focus on the skills, knowledge, and understanding that enable learners to deal more effectively and critically with their real life concerns – in the family, with friends, at work, and in the local community and wider society. Learning programmes value and build on the knowledge and experience adults bring to their learning. Individual and group learning plans promote learner control and ownership of learning, and enable recognition of progress through the distance learners travel towards their own goals.

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You will find Scotland's Adult Literacies Curriculum Guidelines: learning, teaching and assessment at
www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/.

