

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**12 NOVEMBER 2009**

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	ECS/52/09

**CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE - ASSESSMENT**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**Summary**

This Report is extracted from Scottish Government's Strategic Vision and Key Principles for Assessment in Curriculum for Excellence and contributes to following outcome of ***Strengthening the Highlands***:

We will continue to raise levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy for pupils in pre-school, primary and secondary provision and maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and achieve the outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence.

It also relates directly to the Single Outcome Agreement 2 objectives of:

- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Scottish Government's plan for assessment includes the following:

- Assessment practices will follow and support the new curriculum. This will promote higher quality learning and teaching and give more autonomy and professional responsibility to teachers.
- Standards and expectations will be defined in a way that reflects the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This will support greater breadth and depth of learning and place a greater focus on skills development (including higher order skills).
- A national system of quality assurance and moderation for 3-18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving greater consistency and confidence in their professional judgements.
- A National Assessment Resource will help teachers to achieve greater consistency and understanding in their professional judgements. There will also be a major focus on CPD to help teachers develop the skills required.

1.2 A revised assessment system will be driven by the curriculum and so will necessarily reflect its values and principles through:

- a more effective assessment system which supports greater breadth and depth of learning and a greater focus on skills development
- collaborative working, a better-connected assessment system with better

links between pre-school, primary and secondary schools, colleges and other settings to promote smooth transitions in learning

- better understanding of effective assessment practice and sharing of standards and expectations as well as more consistent assessment
- more autonomy and professional responsibility for teachers.

## **2. Purposes and Principles**

2.1 Information from assessment serves several important purposes: to support learning; to give assurance to parents and others about learners' progress; to provide a summary of what learners have achieved, including through qualifications and awards, and to inform future improvements.

2.2 Above all, assessment needs to meet learners' needs and enable all learners to achieve aspirational goals and maximise their potential. Practice should follow and reinforce the curriculum and promote high quality learning and teaching approaches.

It needs to support learning by engaging learners and providing high quality feedback. It has to be fair and inclusive and allow every learner to show what they have achieved and how well they are progressing.

Approaches should be proportionate and fit for purpose: different forms of assessment are appropriate at different stages and in different areas of learning.

Assessment which is used as the basis for awarding qualifications needs particular safeguards to ensure fairness to all candidates and give confidence to colleges, universities and employers.

2.3 Assessment approaches should help learners to show their progress through the levels and enable learners to demonstrate their achievements in a range of ways which are appropriate to learning. For learners to demonstrate that their progress is secure and that they have achieved a level, they will need opportunities to show that they:

- have achieved a breadth of learning across the experiences and outcomes for an aspect of the curriculum
- can respond to the level of challenge set out in the experiences and outcomes, and are moving forward to more challenging learning in some aspects; and
- can apply what they have learned in new and unfamiliar situations.

## **3. Assessing progress**

3.1 Teachers assess progress constantly as part of daily learning and teaching. They do this, for example, by watching and listening to learners carrying out tasks, by looking at what they write and make, by considering how they answer questions. They get to know their learners well, build up a profile of their progress, strengths and needs and involve them in planning what they need to learn next.

Teachers will use evidence of learning to identify areas where progress has been particularly strong or less secure. The evidence will be different depending upon

the learning activity and learners' preferences about how to show what they have learned.

- 3.2 Teachers need a range of assessment approaches to assess the different types of achievement across the curriculum. They will have access to support and materials to help them with this task including through the National Assessment Resource.

From time to time teachers also take stock of their learners' progress in order to be able to plan ahead and to report on progress. This is vital in ensuring that learners' progress is on track and that action is being taken to address any problems at the earliest possible point. This stocktaking is particularly important at transitions when some can fall through the net.

- 3.3 Under the 5-14 Programme, learners moved to the next level as soon as they had achieved a set of learning outcomes. Reflecting the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, progress is now defined in terms of 'how much' and 'how well' as well as learners' rate of progress. This approach will promote greater breadth and depth of learning including a greater focus on the secure development of skills and knowledge.

Assessing progress across the breadth of learning, in challenging aspects and when applying learning in different and unfamiliar contexts will also help teachers to plan, track progress and summarise achievement in a rounded way.

#### **4. Ensuring consistency**

- 4.1 The practices for arriving at a shared understanding of standards and expectations involve teachers:

- working together from the guidance provided to plan learning, teaching and assessment
- building on existing standards and expectations
- drawing on exemplification
- engaging with colleagues to share and confirm expectations.

- 4.2 Teachers will also have access to a new national resource - the National Assessment Resource (NAR) - which will help them as they make their judgements about progress. Using national examples of the standards which will be provided as part of the NAR will support teachers in developing consistent standards. In some areas of the curriculum, there will be additional illustrations of performances and learners' work to clarify the expected standards.

- 4.3 Moderation will focus particularly in the key areas of literacy and numeracy that are so important for learners. It aims to achieve consistency by:

- enabling teachers to share their understanding of standards and expectations of performance
- involving teachers in professional dialogue with colleagues
- using nationally provided exemplification illustrating achievement and progress
- focusing on the quality of assessment tasks and resources before they are

used

- sampling learners' evidence and reviewing teacher's judgements.

- 4.2 At school level, teachers need to have opportunities to discuss and share expectations across the curriculum with a view to achieving consistency. These expectations also apply more widely at associated schools group/cluster level, and in colleges and other providers, where examples of standards and expectations can be shared, particularly in key areas such as literacy and numeracy. Exemplification material will help to make standards and progression clearer and support reliable assessment.
- 4.3 External moderation will focus on the judgements teachers make and on moderation practices. As an Education Authority, Highland will have a key role in ensuring that our schools have suitable arrangements in place to support teachers' judgements and focus on any action required for improvement.
- 4.4 At present Highland has a Local authority Assessment and Reporting Group which is facilitated by a Quality Improvement Officer and is developing practical strategies of taking forward Assessment in the light of the National principles and the Highland Learning Teaching and Assessment policy previously agreed at the ECS Committee.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 Members are requested to:

- Note the Strategic Vision and Key Principles of Assessment for Curriculum for excellence.
- Agree that it represents a sound set of principles for work in Highland.
- Call for a further report on Assessment and Reporting to parents as continuing progress is made on the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Date: 28 October 2009

Author: Quality Assurance and Development Manager

Ref: HF/TMcC

Background Papers: