

Curriculum for Excellence

factfile

Background and benefits



What is Curriculum for Excellence?

Curriculum for Excellence is bringing learning to life in the way education is delivered for all 3-18 year olds – in nursery, primary, secondary, at college, workplace or community learning. It takes a fresh approach to what, how and where young people learn. It aims to raise standards, improve knowledge and develop skills, closing the gap between the lowest and highest performers. Ultimately it aims to nurture young people as successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Why is change needed?

The world is changing fast. Today's young person may have 10-14 jobs by the time they are 38. We need to prepare learners for jobs that don't exist, using technology that hasn't been invented to solve problems we can't yet imagine. We aim to equip young people with knowledge, confidence and skills, giving them a competitive edge in a global job market.

When is it happening?

It's already happening. From Autumn 2010 pre-school to S1 will be working to Curriculum for Excellence guidance and standards. S2 and above will continue to work primarily within the existing curriculum and qualifications system, and will benefit from changes in learning and teaching. The current S1s will be first to take the new qualifications from 2013-14.

What will be different/better?

- Learners will experience a broad, deep, general education to S3, with options in the senior phase to specialise, go on to further study, improve skills and get work experience.
- The 'learner journey' will be joined up from 3-18 to avoid gaps and overlaps in learning and to make the most of achievements outside school.
- Learners will work at a pace that suits, with enough challenge and support to stretch them.
- Lessons will be more engaging, inspiring and relevant to everyday life.
- Teachers will make connections between subjects, helping children make sense of the world.
- Children will learn *how* to learn and how to use their learning, not just memorise information to pass tests. This will help them adapt in an uncertain future with the ability to think for themselves, make sound judgements, challenge, enquire and find solutions.
- There's more focus on knowledge *and* skills – including vital skills: literacy and numeracy, which underpin all learning and are critical in life.
- There are changes to assessment and how progress is reported to give learners, parents and employers better information on potential and achievement.
- There are new qualifications from 2013 and more flexibility in how young people take qualifications.

(See other factfiles: *the Secondary experience* and *Qualifications+Assessment*.)

Autumn 2010

Curriculum for Excellence in action
Bringing life to learning and learning to life

Background and benefits

What stays the same?

Curriculum for Excellence builds on the great teaching practice that exists already. Other things remain constant too... the laws of physics; the rules of English or French grammar. Subjects will be broadly similar.

Is there more or less choice for learners?

The whole thrust of Curriculum for Excellence is to focus on learners' needs, including offering personalisation and choice. National guidance provides more choice in how learning is delivered. Management of the curriculum to provide choices is for schools to determine.

What guides what teachers teach?

Teachers and other practitioners work to national guidance called *Experiences and Outcomes* – a rigorous framework for progression. See it online at www.ltscotland.org.uk. (This information is aimed at professionals.) It's then up to professionals to deliver in a way that works best for their local context.

How are schools preparing for change?

Schools have been preparing for change for a number of years with support from their local authorities, government and national agencies. HMIE – inspectors of education – are also working with schools over the Autumn providing further training, information and support to help to ensure consistently higher standards, building on existing best practice.

Does active learning mean more school trips?

Active learning doesn't mean running around, being outdoors or school trips. It means encouraging young people to think, question, research and work together rather than being fed information.

What if children don't like group work?

Teachers are expected to use a range of approaches and to help children so that they can learn to work in different ways, including in groups – an essential skill for life.

Will the new exams be harder?

No. Nor will they be easier. They'll just be different, to reflect learning. Some qualifications, like the new National 4, are assessed by the teacher, not an exam.

Who is responsible for standards during change?

As before, teachers/lecturers are responsible for their teaching. Head Teachers/College Principals are responsible for teaching standards and performance and should seek the views of their 'customers' – pupils and their parents, students, learners. Local Authorities (Councils) are responsible for schools and community learning services. HMIE – inspectors of education – are responsible for overall monitoring and reporting.

How will we know if the change is working well?

Schools and local authorities will be monitoring the impact of any changes on learners and making any necessary adjustments as they go. HMIE will know from inspections if outcomes are generally better (or worse) and will be monitoring progress closely. They report to the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board – comprising of all the main stakeholders in education, including teacher unions, parents, Scottish Government, national agencies, local authorities, and others. Management Board will report back to government, parents, learners and other interested parties on progress.

What about reports on progress?

Schools are already skilled at describing how children are progressing and they will continue to monitor and report on each child's performance – from marks and comments in jotters to end of term reports and parents evening discussions. Individual schools can provide information on how they will report on progress.

How will employers or universities know what to look for?

The Scottish Qualifications Authority is producing information and guidance on the new qualifications and will keep teachers, colleges, universities, parents and employers updated with progress. Young people will also have records of what they have achieved.

Where can I get information or ask a question?

Speak to your local school or visit:
www.youngscot.org (learners)
www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk (parents and carers)
www.employersandyoungpeople.co.uk (employers)
www.sqa.org.uk (information on qualifications)
www.hmie.gov.uk (standards, inspections)
www.ltscotland.org.uk (teaching practice and support)
www.engageforeducation.org (share ideas and questions about education issues)
www.scotland.gov.uk/cfeinaction (examples of CfE in action and signposts to further information).

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