

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Over the last few months, parents and carers have submitted their questions to the National Parent Forum of Scotland about Curriculum for Excellence and the new qualifications at our Qualifications Plus events and through our website. The answers to these questions are given below and are provided by Education Scotland, Scottish Government and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. If you have any further questions, please share them with us via our website www.parentforumsotland.org or by email enquiries@parentforumsotland.org

Curriculum Planning

1. How do I know if 5, 6, 7 or 8 National courses in S4 are better for my child?

Every child and school is different. Curriculum for Excellence as a whole is about providing learners with the range of qualifications and experiences that meet their individual needs and aspirations – it goes much wider than the number of qualifications young people study for in S4. Overall, it is about planning for the best range and quality of qualifications and awards to suit young people’s aspirations and progression routes beyond school.

Whilst studying for qualifications will be a central feature of the Senior Phase there will also be other important aspects of learning which need planned such as continuing to develop a range of skills to prepare young people for their next steps in life – into higher education, further education, training or employment. So schools need to consider how they support young people to make informed decisions about the length of courses (e.g. one or two years) and the number of qualifications they are presented for in any given year. Taking qualifications over a variable timeframe can support young people to progress in their learning without having a “two term dash” from one level of qualification to the next. It can create space for more in-depth learning and allow more time to be spent on challenging learning at higher levels.

Curriculum models with different numbers of subjects can deliver the entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence. The model adopted should have a clear and robust educational rationale and be the one schools and education authorities, in discussion with parents and learners, feel is best suited to delivering the goals of Curriculum for Excellence for their learners.

2. What type of things would I expect my school to consider in reaching an acceptable “rationale”?

In developing their curriculum models, schools need to take into account a range of factors, including: the views of teachers, parents and learners, the staff and

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

resources available to them, the proximity and partnerships with other schools, colleges and universities, employment and business opportunities.

The rationale needs to take account of the shared values of the school community, meet the needs of all learners and take account of the principles for curriculum design (which include breadth, progression, depth, personalisation & choice, coherence, relevance and challenge & enjoyment).

Whatever is adopted as its Senior Phase curriculum model, a school should at all times endeavour to utilise the resources and staffing available to meet the individual needs and aspirations of learners – whether that be for progression on to employment, training or further learning at college or university.

3. What is the Scottish Government doing to ensure all young people have the same opportunities across Scotland and aren't disadvantaged by a postcode lottery approach to implementing Curriculum for Excellence?

In keeping with longstanding Scottish educational practice, there can be no single curriculum model for delivering CfE in Scottish schools. It is for each school and its education authority to work together to develop and deliver a curriculum approach that is best suited to their circumstances and needs, making good use of the flexibility Curriculum for Excellence provides. Parents and learners should be involved in decisions about how Curriculum for Excellence is delivered in their school. This is how Scottish education works. Approaches in schools will emerge and change over time as schools further develop the approaches that suit their learners and circumstances best.

4. How can you reassure me that my child will not be disadvantaged by doing 5 or by doing 8 subjects in S4?

No child should be disadvantaged by Curriculum for Excellence. Curriculum for Excellence is an ambitious and wide-reaching change in Scottish education. It is a necessary change to ensure we have an education system that enables our young people to be successful in the modern world. It has been introduced to benefit learners and give them the type of education that will help them in the future. We have been working closely with all the main partners in education for some time, including universities, colleges and employers, to make sure that they are fully aware of the implications and benefits for them as our young people come through a new school experience.

Scottish Universities are currently reviewing policies on entrance requirements to reflect Curriculum for Excellence and, nationally, university leaders have affirmed that “they continue to be committed to fair admissions policies and that these will

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

allow equal consideration of candidates who possess the necessary knowledge and skills base irrespective of what routes they may have taken through the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence”.

5. CfE is supposed to offer more personalisation and choice. This doesn't seem to be the case when a whole school/authority approach is being taken to CfE?

Within a whole school approach there should be sufficient flexibility to meet different young people's needs so, as is the case currently, some young people may be taking different numbers of qualifications within any one year.

Class teachers are increasingly offering young people opportunities for personalised learning. This includes tailoring learning and teaching to meet learners' needs. They do this by knowing the young people well and involving them in planning their next steps in learning.

In some areas schools are working together (sometimes across an education authority) to plan the curriculum to facilitate “consortium” or “campus” arrangements. This supports the provision of a wider curriculum as it allows courses to be run which would not attract sufficient numbers in one school to be viable. This necessitates the schools having the same “columns” on their timetable and same timetabling arrangements so that young people can have a coherent and manageable curriculum.

Whilst the school might determine the number of subjects to be taken in S4, in consultation with parents and learners, the young people themselves will still be able to decide which subjects they take in S4 and in subsequent years. Many schools will often offer flexibility within their programmes, potentially allowing learners to take varying numbers of subjects depending on their individual circumstances and aspirations.

Moreover, the flexibility in how schools can structure the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence as a whole means young people can benefit from a range of opportunities for personal development, such as leadership awards, work experience, volunteering etc., alongside qualifications.

As well as developing new National Qualifications, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has developed a number of new Awards in personal development and achievement, languages, wellbeing and religion. These Awards sit within SQA's extensive offering of wider achievement qualifications. For more information, go to www.sqa.org.uk/awards.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

6. How do we share best practice across schools in relation to personalisation?

Best practice is shared across schools in a variety of ways. These include, for example, the Education Scotland website, through SQA shared briefing sessions, online CPD activity and during the additional in-service days allocated.

Parents can also see examples of best practice via the [Parentzone](#) website, and the Annual [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) conference provides an opportunity for parents and Parent Councils to hear about what others are doing across Scotland. The [Scottish Schools Online](#) website can also provide parents with links to all schools in Scotland, including links to where inspection reports can be found.

7. What do Universities and colleges think about Highers studied over 2 years?

Scottish Universities are currently reviewing policies on entrance requirements to reflect Curriculum for Excellence.

As stated above, at a national level university leaders have affirmed that “they continue to be committed to fair admissions policies and that these will allow equal consideration of candidates who possess the necessary knowledge and skills base irrespective of what routes they may have taken through the senior phase (S4-6) of Curriculum for Excellence.”

Several universities have now published their CfE statements, with more to follow shortly:

Institution	Link to statement
University of St Andrews	https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/admissions/ug/undergraduateadmissionspolicy/curriculumforexcellence/
University of Aberdeen	http://www.abdn.ac.uk/prospectus/ugrad/general/your-studies/cfe/
University of Abertay Dundee	http://www.abertay.ac.uk/applying/ukey/cfe/
Robert Gordon University	http://www.rgu.ac.uk/future-students/parents-teachers-and-advisers/curriculum-for-excellence
University of Glasgow	http://www.gla.ac.uk/news/headline_273070_en.html

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Glasgow Caledonian University	http://www.gcu.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/howtoapply/curriculumforexcellence/
University of Edinburgh	http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/undergraduate/applications-admissions/entry-requirements/cfe
Heriot Watt University	http://www.hw.ac.uk/documents/curriculum-for-excellence-response.pdf

Highers will remain the key entry qualifications. In some cases, such as medicine, the relevant requirement may be for 5 Highers in one sitting or by the end of S5. Advanced Highers are highly valued by universities and may be required for entrance elsewhere in the UK. Schools should ensure that learners, for whom they are appropriate, should be able to access these qualifications.

Colleges offer additional routes and timescales into university for young people through for example, HNCs/HNDs and other vocational courses.

8. When it comes to selection for university, how important is additional evidence? For example, the personal statement.

All universities make use of additional evidence in the admissions process, such as personal statements and references, and most also use contextual information about an applicant's educational background. The emphasis placed on this sort of evidence varies by university and degree programme. Vocational and professional degree programmes often place particular value on non-academic criteria, because of the importance of skills and experiences that may not be demonstrated by the achievement of qualifications alone.

9. How will children's experiences be tracked through the Experiences and Outcomes?

When assessing a learner's progress, teachers will gather a range of evidence on their achievements and their next steps for development. This information will inform ongoing reporting to parents on pupil's learning. It is important, that learners are involved in these discussions as well as planning their next steps in learning.

There is guidance in place to support schools in tracking children's progress from age 3 to age 18. Each local authority will have processes in place to do this in the way that works best for them. Parent Councils should ask what arrangements are in place in their school and how parents can get the information they need to help them support their child's progress.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

10. How can it be beneficial for my child to be taught in a class which teaches National 3, 4 and 5 qualifications?

Children progress in their learning at different rates and in different ways. Rather than constraining or limiting learning related to one level, providing opportunities to learn across levels takes account of these different rates of progress.

Being able to learn across different levels was one of the most highly valued design features of Standard Grade identified by parents, teachers and young people. The new National Qualifications have therefore been designed to support this way of learning. It means that decisions about the most appropriate level of qualification a young person is presented for can be made closer to the final assessment dates taking account of how well he/she has progressed. Such decisions will be based on teachers' professional judgements and a range of assessment evidence. Teachers should be keeping parents informed on their children's progress with opportunities to feed into decision making along with their children.

During the Senior Phase we expect young people to be more independent in their learning. Young people will be given the freedom to work collaboratively with other pupils on tasks while the teacher works with other groups.

Qualifications

11. How will the new National 4s and National 5s be different?

The new National 4 and 5 qualifications will have a greater focus on skills development, as well as retaining the important elements of knowledge and understanding. Coursework will play a greater role in contributing to a candidate's grade – matching learning to real-life. Content within the new courses has also been reviewed and refreshed where appropriate and teachers will have greater flexibility in deciding the contexts in which to deliver these

National 4 is made up of Units and the Course assessment will be through an Added Value Unit. National 4 is assessed by the teacher or lecturer and will be subject to quality assurance by SQA to maintain national standards. National 4 courses will not be graded; candidates will receive a pass or fail. The learner will receive recognition for the Units they have achieved.

National 5 will include Units that are assessed and marked by the teacher or lecturer and will be subject to quality assurance by SQA. National 5 also includes a Course assessment. Course assessments may be marked externally by SQA or internally assessed by teachers and lecturers and externally quality assured by SQA.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Course assessment will normally consist of a question paper and/or a Coursework element.

Courses at National 5 will be graded A to D, or ‘No Award’. If a Course assessment is failed, the learner will receive credit for the Units they have achieved at that level.

Practitioners will find much that is familiar in the assessment of new National Courses and Units. However, a greater range of techniques and methodologies for assessment will be encouraged, particularly for Unit assessment, ensuring that assessment is fit for purpose for the subject and level and will support learning and teaching approaches.

12. What’s the difference between fourth level and National 4?

Fourth level Experiences and Outcomes are broadly equivalent to the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(SCQF\)](#) Level 4 and the National 4 qualifications in terms of level of demand. This allows learners to progress smoothly from the broad general education in S3 into the qualifications at whichever level is appropriate for the individuals – whether that be to National 4 for those that are still progressing in their learning at the Third or Fourth level or on to National 5 or Higher for those who have taken their learning to higher levels.

To enable young people to progress smoothly from their broad general education into the Senior Phase and the appropriate level of qualification there are important links between the fourth level and SCQF 4. They are not equivalent as SCQF levels relate to qualifications and not to expectations for the curriculum. However fourth level experiences and outcomes and qualifications at SCQF level 4 are equivalent in terms of demand on the learner.

13. What does Grade D mean?

Grade D, like grades C to A, is reported on the Scottish Qualifications Certificate as a Course award in its own right. Grade D indicates that the candidate has:

- achieved all the National Units for the Course at that level
- attained between 45% and 49% in the Course assessment

14. What is “added value”?

Courses at National 4 and above include assessment of added value. Individual units within the course will assess learner’s knowledge and skills in specific areas of the subject. The added value element allows assessment of learner’s skills and knowledge, and application of these, across the course as a whole.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

At National 4, the added value is assessed through an Added Value Unit (assessed by teachers). At National 5 and above, added value is assessed through the Course Assessment. Course assessments may be marked externally by SQA or internally assessed by teachers and lecturers and externally quality assured by SQA.

These added value assessments may be carried out by one or typically two methods; for example, a question paper and an assignment. All assessments, whatever method is used, will be appropriate for the level. For example, course work at Advanced Higher will have different demands from course work at National 4.

15. Is it correct that National 5 equates to Standard Grade Credit?

Yes. The National 5 qualification is equivalent in level to Standard Grade Credit and Intermediate 2 qualifications.

The equivalence of the other qualifications is shown below.

- Access 1 and Access 2 will be replaced by National 1 and National 2 (pass/fail)
- Access 3 and Standard Grade (Foundation level 5 and 6) will be replaced by National 3 (pass/fail)
- Standard Grade (General level 3 and 4) and Intermediate 1 (Grade A–D) will be replaced by National 4 (pass/fail)
- Standard Grade (Credit level 1 and 2) and Intermediate 2 (Grade A–D) will be replaced by National 5 (Grade A–D)
- Higher (Grade A–D) will be replaced by the new Higher (Grade A–D)
- Advanced Higher will be replaced by the new Advanced Higher (Grade A–D)

For further information download the SQA [guide for parents and carers](#)

16. What information in terms of assessment evidence from S3 can be used towards N4 and N5?

New qualifications draw upon the curriculum experiences and outcomes and have been designed in hierarchies within subjects so that the structure and assessment at one level is linked to those above and below in order to ensure smooth and even progression from the broad general education and between levels of qualifications. Any evidence collected during the broad general education and used for assessment of Units must very specifically and clearly meet the requirements of the appropriate Unit Specification. Teachers and lecturers therefore will need to ensure that sufficient evidence is provided that shows that learners have met the requirements of the Outcomes and the Assessment Standards as detailed in the Unit Specifications.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Practitioners would need to be confident that the learner was currently capable of replicating the evidence at the time of submission of results for certification.

17. Can a learner sit National 5 in S3?

This is not something we would recommend, although it is not prohibited where it is in the interests of the individual learner. Entire cohorts should not be presented for National Qualifications prior to S4 as it is unlikely that all learners in a year group will be at the same level and ready to be presented for qualifications at this stage.

The curriculum is designed to allow children to benefit fully from their broad general education and this runs through to the end of S3.

However learners may undertake Skills for Work Courses or Awards in S3 where appropriate.

18. If pupils fail National 5, but have sufficient assessment evidence to be presented for National 4 certificate, does the fee have to be re-paid?

SQA is discussing pricing options for New Qualifications with Scottish Government

19. At what point will parents know whether there is sufficient evidence to make the decision to go for National 5 or National 4? Can pupils be working towards both – i.e. banking evidence pending final decision? Can a child move from National 4 to National 5 in the same academic year? Can children start Higher work in S4 if they have covered all National 5 work?

Centers will not be required to finally confirm to SQA at which level candidates are being presented until March in the year of presentation. This is sufficiently close to the final assessment dates for the qualifications that teachers should be confident in the level that the candidate is working at. Teachers should be keeping parents informed on pupils' progress with opportunities for parents to feed in to decision making. Learners should, of course, also be involved in that decision making.

The decision about which level of qualification to aim for should be based on a range of evidence that provides confidence about the likelihood of success at any given level. Assessment evidence should be gathered as a part of the learning and teaching throughout the course as it is a key part of supporting young people in making progress. Schools are developing programmes of learning which

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

encourage young people to progress and attain as highly as possible. Most qualifications are designed as hierarchies and this presents more opportunities for learning across levels and more flexibility about when decisions can be made about what level a young person can be presented. Decisions about presentation have always been a key part of the work of staff in secondary schools in discussion with young people and parents.

National 4 Courses are most appropriate for pupils who are still progressing in their learning at the third and fourth Curriculum Level. National 5 Courses are most appropriate for pupils who have taken their learning beyond the third and fourth Curriculum Levels. Teachers will monitor pupils' progress throughout S4. The new National Qualifications have been developed to allow smooth progression up and down the levels, so if a pupil is exceeding the requirements of National 4 they can move to National 5 and if they are not meeting the requirements of National 5 they can move to National 4. Similarly, in many subjects, hierarchies are present between National 5 and Higher to allow movement between these levels,

Centres are able to submit a change of qualification level to SQA up until the end of March in the year of presentation.

Schools may start learning for Higher qualifications in S4 where appropriate for the individual learner.

20. If a pupil fails National 5, i.e. achieves a band 8 or 9, what type of evidence would they have to present to gain a National 4 Course?

There are no automatic arrangements for learners to be awarded the course at National 4 if they do not achieve the Course at National 5. Where learners have achieved all of the required Units in a National 5 Course, they will receive recognition for the Units in their Scottish Qualifications Certificate.

However, if a learner fails the National 5 Course assessment (i.e. receives a band 8 or 9 (No award) in the course assessment) and achieves the National 5 Units, they may be able to get a National 4 award if they achieved the National 4 Added Value Unit. (In English and mathematics Courses they would also require to achieve the National 4 Literacy and Numeracy Units as appropriate).

21. How will the range of skills developed through Curriculum for Excellence, for example communication and presentation, be developed within N5?

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

SQA have looked at each subject to identify which skills for learning, life and work are most relevant for individual subjects and these should be developed across the range of subjects. For example, literacy, citizenship and thinking skills in National 5 History: numeracy and thinking skills in National 5 Physics. Across a young person's programme there will be the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills.

22. What do parents need to know about Recognising Positive Achievement in National 4 and National 5?

Recognising Positive Achievement is the process SQA will put in place to support candidates who don't achieve a National 5 Course external assessment, but who may be able to achieve the Course at National 4 instead.

23. What weighting will be given to Question Papers and Course work at National 5 and above?

The weighting will be different across subjects to reflect the skills, knowledge and understanding in particular subjects. The Course assessment Specifications for each subject provides more detailed information.

24. How will National 4 Courses be assessed and quality assured?

Units in National 4 Courses, including the Added Value Unit, will be assessed by teachers and lectures and quality assured by SQA. However, for the first two years of implementation, centres must use the assessments SQA provides for Added Value Units.

The internal assessment of all Units will be subject to rigorous quality assurance by SQA. From June 2013, new quality assurance arrangements will be introduced to support internal assessment of the new National Qualifications. The new arrangements allow for sharing of knowledge of standards and external verification activities. A combination of approaches will be used to externally verify the internal assessment of the new qualifications including: prior verification, national or area verification events and visiting verification activities (for qualifications where some or all of the evidence must be observed in the center).

25. Will Intermediate 2s still be available in 2015 when the pupils in S4 in session 2012 – 2013 are in sixth year?

Yes. Access, Intermediate and existing Higher qualifications will remain available until 2014/15 to allow the pupils in S4 in session 2012 - 2013 to complete their education with qualifications fully aligned with their earlier learning.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

26. What will pupils do without past papers for practice?

SQA posted Specimen Question Papers and marking schemes for National 5 courses where applicable on their open site in February 2013. Schools can provide learners with a variety of resources and websites to help with revision, and links can also be found on [Parentzone](#).

27. Will pupils still sit prelims? Are there plans to have two diets of examinations?

The decision on whether pupils sit prelims/mock course tests will be for individual schools to make. Prelim examinations/mock course tests do not form part of the formal assessment process for the awarding of qualifications and are not a requirement of SQA qualifications. However, schools use them for:

- Helping to measure where a pupil is with their learning
- Providing feedback to pupils and parents on progress
- Preparation for SQA Course Assessment
- Informing decisions on what level of qualification is appropriate
- Source of alternative evidence for exceptional circumstances consideration

In order to maximise the predictive value, a prelim/mock course test should be based on key areas assessed in the Question Paper(s). This does not necessarily mean that every topic in every area needs to be assessed exhaustively.

There are no plans to have two diets of examinations. The [Exam Timetable: Exam Dates and Exam Times](#) is published each year on the SQA site.

28. I have heard the appeals system is changing. What are the changes and why have they been made at the same time as the new qualifications begin?

SQA's existing appeals service will be replaced by two new 'Results Services'. The new Results Services will provide better support for candidates and reduce the burden on teachers and lecturers, enabling them to focus more on teaching and learning

These are:

1. Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service:

This service will run prior to results being published. If a school or college believes that a candidate has suffered as a result of exceptional circumstances (for example bereavement or illness during an exam) staff can inform SQA of the circumstances immediately. If it is agreed that the exceptional circumstances procedure should apply, the school or college can submit alternative evidence of

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

attainment demonstrated by the candidate, which will be considered. This 'alternative evidence' will be coursework, class assessments or prelims. To take a holistic view on the appropriate result, Examiners will also take account of how the other candidates at that school/college performed in the exam.

2. Post Results Service:

This service will run after candidates have received their certificates. If a school or college is concerned by a candidate's result, they can request a clerical check and/or a review of the marking of the script. The 'script' is the name given to the candidate's exam answer paper. If this check/review of the marking of the script, leads to a change of grade (either up or down), this will be amended on the system and a new certificate will be issued to the candidate. There will be no consideration of 'alternative evidence' with this service. If the original result remains unchanged after the check/review of the marking of the script, the school or college will be charged for this service.

29. If young people go straight to Higher and bypass Nationals, will they not be disadvantaged by not having any experience of proper exam conditions prior to the Higher itself?

If a young person is showing as a strong learner, then the school might start Higher work in S4. This would be taking account of the individual needs of the learner and ensuring that they can succeed at the most appropriate time in their learning journey. Schools will be preparing their learners for the various assessment approaches relevant to the specific qualifications they are sitting in advance of the final examinations – for example, through prelim examinations. Many countries do not have examinations every year for young people – just on exit from school. There is no evidence to show that this disadvantages young people in their performance in examinations.

30. We understand that Curriculum for Excellence is designed to benefit all children. But we still feel that for children with additional support needs there are issues that need to be resolved. (Example given of child with dyslexia wishing to study French where no spelling concessions made compared with English where there are concessions).

Curriculum for Excellence is designed to benefit all children, including those with additional support needs. Children and young people are entitled to personal support to gain access to learning activities which will meet their needs. There are also arrangements in place with the Additional Support for Learning legislation and Getting It Right for Every Child, to ensure that schools and authorities provide young people with the support they need to overcome any barriers they may experience to benefit from their education.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

The importance of schools working closely with parents to accommodate a child's needs is recognised and Education Scotland provides support for teachers to help them improve their skills in this area. Enquire provides an independent service providing advice and support for parents (www.enquire.org.uk)

SQA allow assessment arrangements to be put in place for learners who are disabled and/or who have been identified as having additional support needs. These arrangements are designed to provide learners with an equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do. For example, learners with dyslexia may receive extra time, use ICT or use a reader and / or a scribe in some assessments.

Centres must have robust evidence of a learner's need for a particular assessment arrangement and not only a diagnosis of a particular disability or difficulty. What can be allowed depends on the requirements of the particular assessment. It is important that the assessment arrangement provided does not undermine the integrity of the assessment or the meaning and value of the particular qualification concerned. For example, in the assessment of Writing in French, the purpose of the assessment objective of Writing is concerned with assessing the learner's ability to write and spell correctly in French. A wide range of assessment arrangements, including, for example the use of extra time or appropriate ICT will help learners achieve the standard themselves.

In Unit assessment, there is more flexibility to change or modify assessments to address the specific needs of individual learners and provide personalisation and choice. Normally, SQA approval is not required to change or modify Unit assessment as long as the Outcomes and Assessment Standards are met. Schools are required to carry out their own internal verification of Unit assessment in addition to SQA quality assurance.

31. Why are teachers saying that there is not enough time in S4 to fit in 8 subjects?

There is a misconception in the system that there is not enough time in S4 to fit in 8 subjects related to the 160 hours notional learning associated with the qualifications. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Handbook describes notional hours learning as:

“... the time judged to be required for the `average learner' to achieve the learning outcomes and does not measure the time actually taken by any individual learner.” Further, notional learning hours include all the learning activities that are required to achieve the course and can include prior learning. On this basis, and as the learning for the National Qualifications builds on the Experiences and Outcomes and skills, knowledge and understanding gained in the Broad General Education

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

(BGE), learning within the broad general education can contribute towards these notional learning hours and these need not constrain timetabling options in S4.

It is entirely legitimate for a proportion of learners' time in S3 to be spent on learning which relates directly to a qualification to be taken in the senior phase, as long as it is planned and delivered in the context of the Experiences and Outcomes (Es and Os) (and the BGE more generally).

Qualifications should be the culmination of learning. Learning through the BGE should be understood as an integral part of preparation for qualifications and be informed by SQA specifications whilst not being driven by them alone.

32. How do we know that all teachers/schools are going to have the pupils ready for the new qualifications? Some saying that they don't know what to do yet? How can you ensure that it is a level-playing field for the first couple of years? i.e. How can we be sure that all pupils have had the right experiences under CfE that will set them up for the new qualifications?

Education Scotland and Local Authorities are in constant contact with teachers in schools and are confident that schools are in a good state of readiness to deliver the new qualifications. Schools and education authorities have a responsibility within the Standards in Scottish Schools Act for the quality of provision and ensuring continuous improvements.

In addition to the publication of Specimen Question Papers, coursework assessment support and Unit assessment support, SQA has run a programme of 145 Subject Implementation Events attended by over 7,000 secondary school teachers, at venues around the country, to support the introduction of the new National Courses from National 2 to National 5, being introduced in session 2013-14 to support Curriculum for Excellence. On average, 96% of attendees stated that the New Assessment Support Materials had helped their planning and thinking around assessment of the new qualifications and 93% felt the event itself will help their planning.

These events will be repeated over the next two years for new National Courses in Higher and Advanced Higher. In total SQA will run around 450 events, providing around 24,000 support days to teachers.

CfE Policy

33. We know that leadership and having high ambitions for the school you lead and the young people in it is really important. What do we do if we see differences in the quality of this?

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Education Scotland has a lead role in developing leadership capacity in Scottish education by taking forward the recommendations of ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’.

Education Authorities are the main players in this area. HMI gather data that is shared with the authorities and used for improvement.

Parent Councils also have a key role to play in supporting their school and ensuring that it provides the best education for its pupils. They should work in partnership with the headteacher and local authority, and contribute to the school’s improvement planning. Resources to support Parent councils are available on [Parentzone](#).

34. Does the curriculum take account of the skills shortage in Scotland?

There is now a very explicit emphasis on skills and that will develop as the curriculum itself evolves and develops. From very early on children are being made aware of the skills they are developing as they learn across all curricular areas. We are seeing strong evidence of this emerging with children able to explain what skills they were using when, for example, they were learning about history or science. We are very aware that in the design of a curriculum we need to prepare children and young people for a world where we can only predict what skills they might need. At college, courses are very attuned to the skills base needed by the local labour market. There is a focus on gaining apprenticeships with companies where learning takes place ‘on the job’. It is important that young people can talk about the learning they have experienced when they go to interviews. HMI are seeing schools who work very well with colleges and businesses and are jointly providing rich experiences for learners. When the universities talk to employers they ask for people with ‘adaptable skills’. CfE offers learners a continuous pathway of skills development.

Skills for learning, life and work are embedded within the Experiences and Outcomes from early through to Fourth curriculum levels and are carried through in to the new qualifications. There is a cross-curricular focus to developing skills which will enhance employability skills during the broad general education and senior phase. And, while learners should not be presented for National Courses before S4, they can undertake Skills for Work courses and Awards in S3 thus developing and certificating their employability skills at an earlier stage.

35. How are you working with employers to ensure they have a full understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and the qualifications learners will be leaving with?

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Scottish Government has had extensive engagement with Universities and employer organisations to support their understanding of curriculum for Excellence.

SQA also works with employers, training providers and stakeholders to develop their understanding of the new National qualifications. A dedicated resource has been provided to employers to ensure they have a full understanding of Curriculum for Excellence and what this means in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding achieved, under the new system, by potential employees’

36. What is being done to communicate Curriculum for Excellence across the wider culture of Scotland and beyond it?

Communication of Curriculum for Excellence remains a high priority and much has been done to engage with the full range of wider stakeholders in Scottish Education including employers, Colleges and Universities, community organisations, youth workers, and many more. Beyond Scotland, there has been significant interest in Curriculum for Excellence, with many visitors coming to see it in practice and here more at Conferences and events such as the Scottish Learning Festival.

37. As the curriculum develops in varying forms across different schools and authorities, how do HMI evaluate consistency within flexibility?

HMI will evaluate the curriculum based on how well it meets the needs of children and young people and guided by shared advice on evaluating the curriculum. They will, for example, look closely at the school’s approaches to developing and evaluating the curriculum and who staff have involved in that process. They have the ability to gather first hand evidence by looking directly at the quality of learning and talking to children and young people about their experiences and achievements.

38. Do you see Curriculum for Excellence as a work in progress?

Curriculum for Excellence is not a one-off event - it is now about how we deliver our education in Scotland and will continue to evolve. The system of education is not static, it should be dynamic and Curriculum for Excellence should lead to continued improvement. We are now progressing with the pupils in S3 in session 2012 – 2013 being the first to take the new qualifications in 2014. They will be the first pupils to have completed their whole secondary experience under Curriculum for Excellence since it was introduced.

Curriculum for Excellence – Qualifications Plus Questions and Answers

Glossary

BGE	Broad General Education
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
Es and Os	Experiences and Outcomes
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority

Links

- www.sqa.org.uk/awards
- [Education Scotland](#) Higher Education page
- [Parentzone](#)
- [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#)
- [Scottish Schools Online](#)
- [SQA guide for parents and carers](#)
- [Exam Timetable](#): Exam Dates and Exam Times
- [Enquire](#)