



# TRANSITION FROM BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION TO NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

A Position Paper

Curriculum for Excellence

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### Curriculum for Excellence

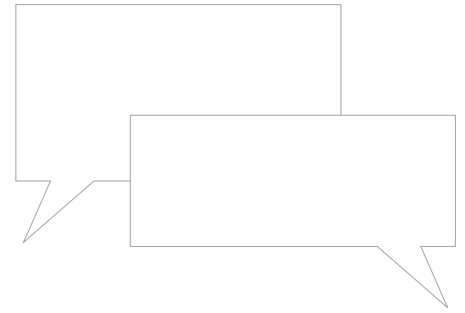
During the course of last session, in consultation with secondary headteachers, two Curriculum for Excellence Senior Phase position papers were published which outlined the expectations of the authority during this transition phase. These can be accessed on Glasgow Online. The guidance in those papers remains relevant as we enter 2012-2013.

At the start of this term the executive director also wrote to the parents of S3 pupils outlining our plans as an authority to ensure high expectations and a smooth transition for young people in Glasgow secondaries

Further consultation with subject networks and with headteachers early this session has indicated that there remain a number of questions on which staff require clarification. While many of these questions have been addressed across a wide range of national publications, this paper seeks to bring the information together as simply as possible, under key themes, and to respond to the questions asked by secondary teachers in Glasgow recently.

This position paper should support staff in their understanding of how the transition from Broad General Education (BGE) to Senior Phase will be managed in Glasgow secondaries and to address some of the associated questions relating to national qualifications.

# Frequently Asked Questions



## Evidence

For how long does evidence need to be kept if, for example, the evidence is a product, as in technical education, or will a photograph suffice?

SQA guidance suggests that evidence requires to be retained until it is required for verification. In the case of practical work it is likely that a photograph will suffice. However SQA have recently undertaken a consultation on this issue and the outcome will be confirmed to establishments shortly.

Will schools be allowed to use evidence from learning in the BGE for qualifications in S4?

Yes. Evidence of learning can be gathered at any point to support qualification. This should not be interpreted as confirmation that 'starting the course early' is acceptable. This point is further developed in a response below.

## Workload

When are teachers going to get the time to mark and moderate the internal Added Value Unit for all pupils?

In reality not all pupils in a cohort will be involved in this process, for the purpose of certification. Only those pupils who are unlikely to achieve National 5 require to undertake an internally assessed National 4 Added Value Unit.

As discussed in a further response below, a teacher may engage all young people in a class in the open ended project- based approach of the added value unit. The teacher will provide the usual ongoing formative feedback during the course of the learning, and possibly even retain evidence where there is a degree of doubt. However, only those who are registered with SQA for National 4 will require their work to be moderated on a pass/fail basis. This should reduce workload. It should be stressed that much of the evidence for the Added Value Unit should occur naturally in the everyday learning.

## Time to complete the course

How can pupils cover all that is expected of them for National 5 in S4 if they do not have 160 hours?

The concept of 160 hours is nominal. In other words it would only apply if none of the learning related to the qualification had been undertaken before the start of S4. In reality this is no longer the case. We have never had articulation across the different stages of learning. Standard Grade did not articulate with 5-14 and Highers did not articulate with Standard Grade. This has built a professional mindset over the years where we feel we are starting 'fresh' at each stage, with new content and new skills and approaches.

This is not the case in the new curriculum. We now have a curriculum which builds on strands from 3-18, through BGE to qualifications. Unlike before, the learning builds on Es and Os to Fourth level and even beyond, by end of S3. An analysis of content and approaches at Fourth level and in specifications at National 4 should clearly show a 'mirroring' effect with only a limited amount of new content. Obviously the learning demands at a national 5 level will be more developed and sophisticated- but the strands of learning will be broadly the same, building on what has gone before in terms of themes, content, skills, learning approaches and assessment, with the exception of the added value at national 4 which is internally assessed.

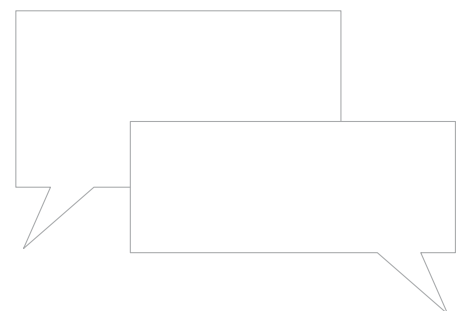
In very simplistic terms, a young person who has had no previous learning experience before S3 would probably require 160 hours of learning for National 5 but a young person who is learning through the BGE will certainly not.

As we develop confidence in a curriculum which really is coherent and builds closely from prior learning, the concept of 'starting the course' and the sometimes limiting attitudes associated with that term, will begin to have less meaning.



## Can the Added Value Unit be done in S3 if it is part of a National Qualification which should not be done until S4?

Of course. Learning which provides evidence for the National 4 added value unit can be gathered before S4. This is a commonly asked question and reflects aspects of the questions above. We need to understand that the requirement not to engage pupils in national qualifications before S4 has been made to ensure that a broad, rich education is the entitlement of every young person. The question asked also reflects an understanding that Added Value Units are somehow 'something different' and isolated from ongoing approaches to learning. It is perhaps unhelpful to think of Added Value as a 'unit' in the sense of being separate from other learning. A study of any of the added value units at National 4 will show that learning for the added value component can be integrated into the normal learning and teaching approaches which are part of learning in the BGE. In addition because of the open ended nature of many of the approaches to Added Value Units, these can profitably be undertaken by pupils aspiring to National 5 or even Higher level. Their evidence would be differentiated by the level of response, with deeper understanding and more refined or developed skills. This last point may also help answer the worries about bi level teaching involving classes of differing ability in S4.





## When should the Added Value Unit be completed?

Whenever the teacher feels pupils in the class are ready.

Please refer to the answer directly above. Evidence of assessment for satisfactory completion of the Added Value Unit can be gathered before S4. This should not be construed as permission for 'starting the course' in S3.

## Subject Choices

Do pupils need to do every subject up to S3?

No. In answering this question it is more helpful not to think that pupils have an entitlement to 'subjects'. BTC3 is clear that the entitlement is for a rich deep experience of the experiences and outcomes up to and including Third level. How schools choose to design that rich, deep experience is the key point- and also the reason why curriculum designs do look different in different schools. The rule of thumb should always be 'Can we as a department and as a school evidence that a rich deep experience of all the Es and Os to Third level has been designed into the curriculum. A cursory coverage of certain Es and Os will not suffice.

Will learners still make subject choices at the end of S2 for the qualifications they will do in S4?

Not routinely in the the traditional way, as a major option choice exercise. There is no longer any need for this model. The BGE does not end in S2 but in S3. Refer to the answer directly above and to Education Scotland's Briefing paper 1 on the BGE for more detail.

### What if a pupil has chosen to specialise in eg history in S3, do they still need to study geography and modern studies to meet the BGE entitlement?

This decision will depend on how the school has designed the BGE. The answers above should illustrate this point. The key question in this case is 'has a rich deep experience of all the Es and Os in Social Studies, been experienced to Third level'?

Also if personalisation options are designed into S3 to reflect pupil talents and interests, has the school designed other mechanisms to ensure the Es and Os have been designed into the curriculum eg mini baccalaureates, enhanced curriculum projects, short courses, planned IDL etc.

### For some high achieving pupils, is studying at 4th level in S3 and not beyond 'holding them back'?

Putting a ceiling on a specific level of study is unhelpful here. Teachers have always recognised and addressed the needs of very able pupils through careful planning and building in increased challenge, even from S1 where transition processes indicate a pupil is more able. In the same way we plan appropriately for pupils with significant additional support needs - who may never achieve even the Second or Third curriculum level. We plan learning to meet the needs of individuals not year groups. We expose each pupil to the appropriate level of breadth, challenge and application for them, within the curriculum framework. For some young people, this will be to the Fourth curriculum level or even beyond.

Why would this suddenly change? We do not and should not place ceilings on the achievement of pupils.

### Does the BGE lead to young people following fewer qualifications?

This question tends to be based on an understanding of 'qualifications' as only SQA qualifications.

And on some kind of 'raw' totalling up' of Standard Grades/intermediates/Highers etc. as in the old model. Curriculum for Excellence highlights the importance of achievement as well as the more traditional notions of attainment and of the entitlement to learning in the four contexts. Therefore schools require to find space in the curriculum for opportunities for wider achievement, and accredited wider achievement, in the senior phase. This could include accreditation from other certifying bodies and even endorsements from work placement supervisors etc - in short achievements other other than





those accredited by the SQA. The building of a 'portfolio' of qualifications over the period from S4 to S6 is an important development in our understanding of the purpose and design of the senior phase.

A key aim of Curriculum for Excellence is to reduce the burden of assessment which young people are engaged in. The position schools take just now during the transition phase is unlikely to be the position taken once the new qualifications bed in. One ultimately has to ask 'do our brightest pupils really need to move lock step through every qualification level?' or should they engage in qualifications at the highest level they can achieve, when they are ready, leaving significantly more quality time for deeper learning without the interruptions of prelims, study leave and the exam diet itself. However, that development is a stage of progress for the future. It depends on a range of external factors which are not yet fully clear.

Glasgow's position during this transition period is very clear. Young people in Glasgow will not be disadvantaged in comparison to young people in other local authorities. In 2013-2014 some young people will undertake National 4 qualifications, those people who are able, will most likely undertake seven or eight National 5 qualifications in S4 and young people in any Glasgow school should be able to engage in five Highers in S5 at one sitting. This is a traditional benchmark.

However this transitional position is likely to change in coming years for the reasons given above.



## The S3 pupil in 2012/2013

### What will S3 look like now?

The Education Scotland advice note for 2012-2013 indicates increased expectations for the curriculum which give a good guide to developments which should be underway or implemented in S3 at this point. In addition the Education Scotland CfE Briefing papers of May, August and September 2012 summarise what the pupil in S3 can expect in terms of the BGE, attainment and achievement and profiling. All teachers should be familiar with these key documents. They can be accessed at the link below.

[educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/resources/index.asp](http://educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/resources/index.asp)

As mentioned above, schools will design the curriculum to meet the entitlements within the BGE and this may currently look slightly different in each school as a result of the local decisions made.

### When does the BGE end?

National guidance is quite clear about this point. The Broad General Education spans from the age of three until the end of S3. Young people may achieve Third Level and into Fourth level and even beyond by the end of S3. But it is the breadth, challenge and application of learning to provide a richness and depth of experience which is important at this stage. Understanding this concept means that just because a young person has achieved Third Level they do not automatically switch to 'starting the course', as in an SQA qualification.

### What is the S3 profile?

An important distinction should be made between the term profiling and 'the profile'. The key purpose of profiling is to build a holistic picture of a young person's achievements and attainment by the end of S3. The profile is the end result and is likely to be a paper or web based product. The process of profiling, where a young person has regular space to reflect with an adult on their attainment and achievement, is the critically important part of the process. To date, schools tend to have focused on the recording aspects of wider achievement, whether this should be on paper or through mechanisms such as e-portfolios. However, the really important part of the process is the quality of engagement and reflection which a young person experiences. Schools will find different mechanisms for this eg through dedicated mentoring periods or

approaches, through PSE periods, through first line guidance mechanisms etc

The profile is not the S3 report. While that may be considered a subset of reporting, the actual profile is very much owned by the learner who has been supported to reflect on, choose and share their attainment and achievements in a learner statement.

The recent Education Scotland briefing on profiling offers an excellent summary which identifies the purpose of the S3 profile and how to build this with young people.

### What should be taught in S3?

Each school by this point should have an overview of how the Es and Os are being designed into the curriculum through the 4 contexts of learning. As mentioned above how this is designed will vary from school to school and indeed may look slightly different. What is taught in S3 will depend on a number of factors such as:

- The 'building blocks' which have already been put in place through S1 and S2
- The varying needs of young people in the S3 cohort
- The identification of opportunities to apply learning in new and unfamiliar contexts
- The use of partnerships and local community links which are unique to each school.

Schools have always utilised their own unique context for the benefits of pupils and this will continue. Indeed it is a strength and not a weakness of Curriculum for Excellence that promotes this kind of flexibility. What will be similar is that all schools should be able to evidence that they are fully providing the national entitlements as outlined in BTC3.