

F/T: 0845 774 1741

E: [scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

All Curriculum for Excellence Management Board  
Members

All Directors of Education

Education Conveners

Leaders of Nurseries and pre – school settings

All Primary and Secondary Headteachers

cc: All College Principals  
Convenor of Universities Scotland  
Chair and Chief Executive of SDS  
Deans of Faculties of Education

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8 January 2010

Dear Colleague

## **TAKING FORWARD CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE**

The beginning of a New Year is traditionally a time to reflect on the achievements of the past and look forward with hope, ambition and imagination to what we can accomplish in the coming year. I wanted to write to you to offer my thanks to you and everyone working in our schools and other establishments for your work over the past year and to set out our plans for ensuring that you are reassured and equipped to take forward Curriculum for Excellence in the remainder of the academic year.

I firmly believe that Scottish education does its job well. This is due to the skills and talents of all those involved in educating our children, young people and adult learners. I also believe that we can do better by making better use of those skills and talents. I am fully committed to the principles and values of Curriculum for Excellence. Curriculum for Excellence is needed to ensure that Scotland has an education system that promotes and supports the highest possible standards of attainment and achievement. It is also necessary to ensure that our young people have the skills and knowledge they need for learning, life and work and to be prepared for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thanks to the support of everyone involved in the education community, from those working on the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board to those

adopting the new approaches in pre-school centres, schools, colleges and the wider education sector across Scotland, we have made good progress over the last year in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence.

The Experiences and Outcomes for the new curriculum were published in April 2009. Together with the framework for learning and teaching contained in *Building the Curriculum 3*, these set out the structure of the new curriculum. *Building the Curriculum 4 – Skills for learning, life and work* was published in October 2009

The Scottish Government announced future arrangements for National Qualifications in June 2009. The new arrangements will build upon the Experiences and Outcomes and so ensure that National Qualifications support the new curriculum. This was followed in September 2009 by the publication of our strategic vision for assessment for Curriculum for Excellence.

The publication of the Framework for Assessment later this month concludes the process of establishing, for the first time, an agreed framework for learning that applies to all sectors and stages. It has been achieved by extensive consultation and engagement with a very large number of practitioners and I believe we have a remarkable degree of unanimity about the principles underpinning our education system.

Our next challenge is to work together to ensure these principles are widely understood and effectively implemented for the benefit of all learners. I am committed to the principle that you, the practitioners, are best placed to make decisions about how to work with learners and their parents to improve learning outcomes. However, I also recognise that you will need advice and support and to share and learn from emerging good practice. I am equally committed to ensuring that detailed arrangements, for example in relation to assessment and qualifications, will improve national standards and are workable.

A great deal of good work is being done locally and nationally to support implementation.

As part of this process I want to take the opportunity to give you a road map for the period from now until June 2010 which will give you an indication of the level and nature of support at national level which you can expect and which will be augmented by locally led activity within your own authorities.

The focus will be on practical support for the three main strands of Curriculum for Excellence on which the high level principles have now been set out:

**Curriculum** – You are already beginning to work with the Experiences and Outcomes for each of the curriculum areas to improve learning and teaching. There is a range of [support for staff on the Curriculum for Excellence website](#)

and from now until June 2010 there will be additional material as detailed on the timeline. Working with partners and stakeholders, Learning and Teaching Scotland will also provide materials to support school managers and staff in the planning process and there will continue to be events to support understanding. I recognise that one of the key challenges teachers now have is answering the many questions from parents and reassuring them that the very best is being done for their children. Quite rightly parents want to hear this from those teaching their children and that is why we are making a toolkit available later this month which will provide you with the resources needed to talk to parents, explaining what is happening and why.(see [Parental toolkit trailer](#)).

**National Qualifications** –The Scottish Qualifications Authority and its partners are currently undertaking the detailed development and implementation work for the new and revised qualifications. The first element of that work is to convert the broad statement of policy made by my predecessor in June 2009 into a set of operational design principles that will underpin the development of the qualifications. SQA and the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board are close to the end of that process.

As with any new qualifications, SQA is ensuring that the teaching profession and stakeholders are fully involved in the qualifications design teams that will help develop the new Literacy & Numeracy and National 4 and 5 qualifications and the review of existing Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications. Positive engagement with you is a critical factor in SQA ensuring the success of the qualifications development and implementation.

Their engagement model will involve a wide range of groups and individuals, including informal quality assurance groups. Regular updates on this work will be available from the [Curriculum for Excellence section of the SQA website](#). There are nine Curricular Area Review Groups with membership from nominated strategic stakeholders, such as the teaching unions and associations, LTS, HE/FE, employers and parents. These groups will work on the vision, skills and principles required for each curriculum area. Each curriculum area has engaged with local authorities, colleges and other interested groups involving over 400 practitioners.

**Assessment** – The Framework for Assessment will be published in January together with an associated paper on quality assurance and moderation. The Framework for Assessment develops the main areas of our assessment strategy: standards and expectations; assessing progress and reporting and monitoring standards. LTS will hold a series of events in January and February to support your understanding of the framework. Beginning at the start of the summer term you will be provided with assessment exemplars. These exemplars will show pupils' work assessed by practitioners against the standards and expectations. The examples will be in the priority areas of literacy and numeracy across all curriculum areas and health and wellbeing. Examples will be provided of every curriculum level and will provide

illustrations of the three aspects set out in the Framework - the application, breadth and challenge of learning. They will explain how you move from the experiences and outcomes to judgements about how much or how well pupils have learned. From mid September, staff will have access to the new online National Assessment Resource.

We have already provided an additional 3 in-service days focussed on the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. I am also persuaded of the need to provide a further in-service day. I am therefore pleased to confirm that this will be available in the summer term to provide you with the quality time that I recognise is essential to support implementation. My expectation would be that this day would be dedicated to gaining a clearer understanding of the requirements for assessment and the new quality assurance and moderation processes which will be set out in the Framework for Assessment. This is in addition to the substantial proportion of current in-service and other Continuing Professional Development activities for educational professionals which focus on the enhancement of learning and teaching in addition to assessment.

I have asked the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board to review progress and report its findings to me as we work towards full adoption of Curriculum for Excellence. I am also visiting schools, nurseries, colleges and universities to see at first-hand the progress which is being made.

Curriculum for Excellence will support the education community to improve learning and teaching, raise standards and enhance the life chances of our children and young people. I am confident that the package of work that I have described in this letter will give you the support that you need to use your skills and talents to improve Scottish education. I am looking forward immensely to working with you to make a success of Curriculum for Excellence and offer my best wishes for the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Russell', written in a cursive style.

**MICHAEL RUSSELL MSP**  
**Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning**



**Resources between January and June 2010 to support full adoption of Curriculum for Excellence by August 2010**

December	Design principles for new literacy and numeracy qualifications agreed Assessment Community Seminars (involving all Local Authorities)
<b>2010</b>	
January	Building the Curriculum 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Assessment Framework published</li> <li>o Seminars</li> </ul> <p>Communication with parents: a suite of materials to support practitioners to communicate with parents.</p> <p>Exemplification to support learning and teaching across all the curriculum areas will be published throughout this period. Examples in this month include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Literacy across learning</li> <li>o Interdisciplinary learning in secondary</li> <li>o Literacy in Gaidhlig case studies</li> </ul>
February	Building the Curriculum 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Follow up events</li> </ul> <p>Curriculum Management and Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Case studies for early years, primary and secondary</li> </ul> <p>Publication of research on Recognising Achievement</p> <p>16+ Learning Choices – Working in Partnership events</p>
March	16+ Learning Choices – Working in Partnership event Exemplification to support learning and teaching will include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Early years DVD for Gaelic Online</li> </ul>
April	Exemplification to support approaches to assessment, in literacy and numeracy and health and wellbeing Curriculum Management and Organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Case studies for early years, primary and secondary</li> </ul> <p>Exemplification to support learning and teaching. Examples will include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The Senior Phase</li> </ul> <p>Building the Curriculum 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Follow up events</li> </ul> <p>CPD resource on parental involvement</p> <p>Design principles for National 4 and National 5 qualifications agreed</p> <p>16+ Learning Choices – Policy and Practices Framework</p>
May	Exemplification to support learning and teaching and assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Numeracy across learning</li> <li>o Literacy and numeracy</li> <li>o Health and wellbeing</li> <li>o Moderation.</li> </ul> <p>Building the Curriculum 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Follow up events</li> </ul> <p>Additional in-service day for all teachers</p>
June	Exemplification to support learning and teaching: Examples will include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Health and wellbeing illustrations</li> <li>o Further interdisciplinary learning</li> </ul> <p>Activity Agreements for all young people in 10 pilot areas.</p> <p>Strategy for Careers Information, Advice and Guidance</p>