



## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide # 1: Curriculum Overview

In 2005 the Scottish Government introduced the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) to state-funded schools in Scotland. It was to be implemented over ten years until it was fully implemented by 2015.

The Curriculum for Excellence is a set of **principles**, guidelines and educational **outcomes** that informs schools about what children should learn through their 14 years at school. It is not a prescriptive curriculum in the sense of describing the exact content that must be taught in schools, or the methodologies that must be used. Rather, Scottish local authorities and individual schools are responsible for creating appropriate, locally relevant learning programmes that will fulfil the outcomes described by the CfE.

The CfE contains guidance for schools and local authorities on creating their teaching programmes, including over-arching **principles**, qualities and **capacities** that education should develop in children, as well as the subject areas of the curriculum that should be covered.

As children and young people move through their school years they advance through **levels** of the CfE, each of which takes around 2-3 years to complete. Their achievement of each level is measured with formal and informal assessments undertaken by teachers in the classroom. However there are no national assessments of students in Scotland until they reach the 4th year of secondary school, around age 15.

The bulk of the CfE documentation consists of sets of **Experiences and Outcomes** in the different subject areas of the curriculum. These describe what understandings children should develop and what abilities children should acquire through undertaking learning and teaching programmes in school.

The levels of the CfE from ages 5-14 (Nursery to Secondary year 3) are collectively called the **Broad General Education** phase of the curriculum. In this phase children and young people cover a set range of subjects, making only a few specialist choices in early Secondary schooling in areas such as science, languages and expressive arts.

At the end of this **Broad General Education** phase, at the beginning of Secondary year 4, students enter programmes of study that lead to national assessments. This three year period is known as the **Senior Phase**. There are four types of assessment, known as **Access, Nationals, Highers and Advanced Highers**, each of increasing complexity. Each programme of study and assessment takes one academic year, with exams held in May and June.

Over the three years of the **Senior Phase** students can undertake a selection of these assessments, some as formal exams and some as portfolios of work and internal assessment, to accumulate a set of formal qualifications with which they leave school sometime between ages 16 and 19.

This set of formal qualifications, together with the broad general education they have received, is intended to enable school-leavers to access further education, training programmes, employment, apprenticeships etc.

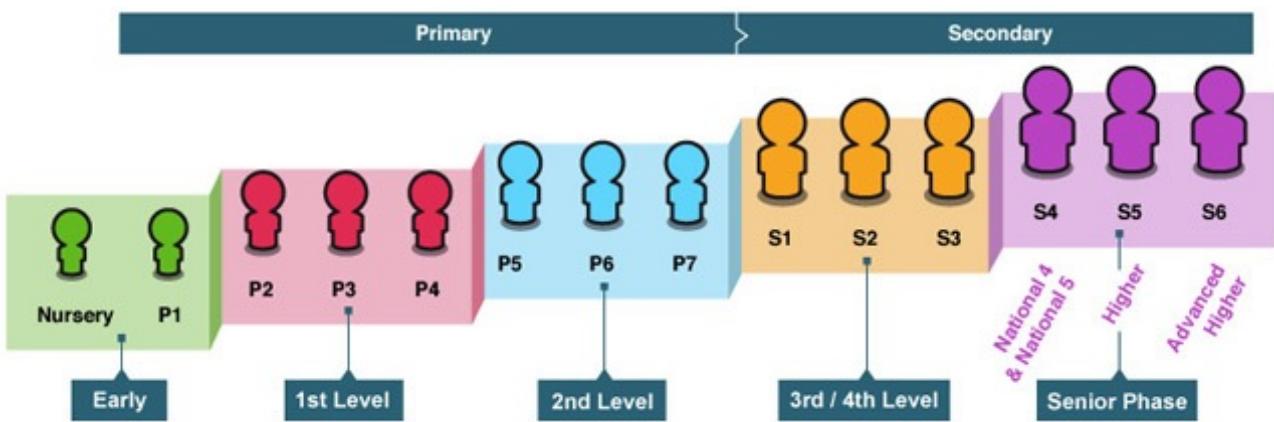


## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide # 2: Curriculum Levels

Children move through their schooling in age-specific batches or “year groups”, nearly always staying with the same year group and moving up in annual stages. In primary schools these are called Primary stages (P1, P2 etc) and similarly at secondary school they are S1, S2 etc. Children starting at nursery and staying in school until the end of S6 will be at school for 14 years in total.

The Curriculum for Excellence divides this 14-year school career into six **levels** of achievement. Confusingly, the first of these **levels** is called **Early Years**, the second is called **Level 1**, and so on up with the sixth level being called **Senior Phase**. The chart below makes this a bit clearer.



Each **level** is intended to be achieved by most children over a two or three-year period. The Curriculum allows for the fact that some children will achieve more quickly than this, and others more slowly, and that they will progress at different rates in different subjects.

For this reason a class of children at P5, for instance, may contain some who are working at **level 2** in Maths and **level 3** in Social Studies, or **level 1** in Writing and **level 3** in Sciences. Each child, in theory, moves through each **subject** in the curriculum at the appropriate pace for them. Some children may not achieve all the **levels** of the curriculum by the end of S3, and some may go beyond **Level 4** into ‘enrichment’ learning.

The levels of the curriculum from **Early Years** to **Level 4** are collectively called the **Broad General Education** stage.

When children reach the end of S3 (aged 14/15) they finish the **Broad General Education** stage of the curriculum, regardless of the curriculum level they have reached, and they move to national qualifications courses leading to **Access**, **National**, **Higher** and **Advanced Higher** qualifications in different **subjects**. This 6th level of the Curriculum for Excellence is called the **Senior Phase**.



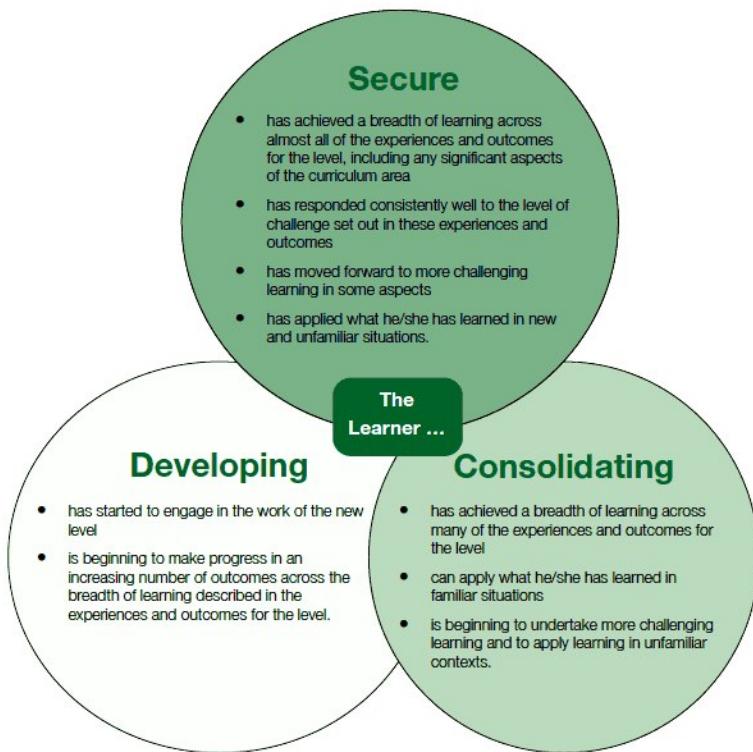
## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide # 3: Achieving the Curriculum Levels

As children and young people move through the five **levels** of the Curriculum their achievement is measured against the **Experiences and Outcomes** defined for each subject. There are three stages of achievement that they move through:

Developing           Consolidating           Secure

A child just starting work at a given level will be at the 'Developing' stage. Over time he or she will move to the 'Consolidating' stage and then to the 'Secure' stage. The diagram below describes what each of these stages means.



When a child has reached the 'Secure' stage at a given **level** of the Curriculum they will be ready to move on to the next **Curriculum level**.

Teachers use a variety of formal and informal assessments to determine a child's progress through each curriculum **level**. These assessments form a body of evidence for each child's progress.

The curriculum documents suggest that a child will take around three years to complete each level, on average, from 'Developing' to 'Secure'.

However this will vary between individuals according to each child's ability and interests, social experiences in and out of school, the quality of teaching, health and other factors.

The Curriculum for Excellence allows for this variation by defining the year groups within which **most** children should achieve each level, but these are guides rather than absolutes.

*The Curriculum for Excellence Framework for Assessment document states that*

**“progression in learning is usually not linear and .. children and young people will progress in different ways.”**



## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide # 4: Curriculum subject areas

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence is organised under eight curriculum areas for all students up to the end of **Level 4**. These are:

- **Expressive Arts**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Languages**
- **Mathematics**
- **Religious and Moral Education**
- **Sciences**
- **Social Studies**
- **Technologies**

Each of these curriculum areas is, in turn, divided into a number of related subjects.

For example **Social Studies** is divided into three separate subjects:

#### **People, past events and societies**

*We might think of this subject as History or Modern Studies*

#### **People, place and environment**

*We might think of this subject as Geography*

#### **People in society, economy and business**

*We might think of this subject as a mix of Citizenship, Politics, Sociology, Economics, Business*

Each subject in a curriculum area has a set of **Experiences and Outcomes** to be achieved by children and young people as they move through the **levels** of the curriculum. Local Authorities and schools are responsible for creating the programmes of work that their students undertake in order to achieve the **Experiences and Outcomes** in each curriculum area.

When students reach **Year 4** of secondary school they move into the **Senior Phase** of the curriculum. In this phase the subject areas are different, and the programmes of study are focussed on national qualifications achieved through coursework and exams.

There is a wide range of subjects available at the Senior Phase, but not all schools will offer all subjects. Examples of the most commonly available subjects are Maths, English, History, Geography, Modern Studies, Music, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Art, Religious Studies. Less widely available subjects include Philosophy, Classical Studies, Cantonese, Music Technology, Psychology.

A full list of subjects available at the Senior Phase can be found at  
<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41317.html>

The lists below show the breakdown of subjects within each curriculum area of the Curriculum for Excellence between **Level 1** and **Level 4**:

**Expressive Arts:**

- Participation in performances and presentations
- Art and design
- Dance
- Drama
- Music

**Health and Wellbeing:**

- Mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing
- Planning for choices and changes
- Physical education, physical activity and sport
- Food and health
- Substance misuse
- Relationships, sexual health and parenthood

**Languages**

- Classical Languages
- Gaelic
- Literacy and English
- Literacy and Gaelic
- Modern Languages

**Mathematics**

- Number, money and measure
- Shape, position and movement
- Information handling

**Religious and Moral Education**

- Christianity (or ‘Catholic Christianity’ in Catholic schools)
- World religions selected for study (or ‘Other world religions’ in Catholic Schools)
- Development of beliefs and values

**Sciences**

- Planet Earth
- Forces, electricity and waves
- Biological systems
- Materials
- Topical science

**Technologies**

- Technological developments in society
- ICT to enhance learning
- Business contexts for developing technological skills and knowledge
- Computing science contexts for developing technological skills and knowledge
- Food and textiles contexts for developing technological skills and knowledge

- Craft, design, engineering and graphics contexts for developing technological skills and knowledge



## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide # 5: Experiences and outcomes

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence contains guidelines for schools to design their own teaching materials, along with underlying principles, capacities and qualities that education should develop in children.

However the bulk of the curriculum's documentation consists of sets of **experiences and outcomes** in the different subject areas of the curriculum. These describe what understandings children should develop and what abilities children should acquire through undertaking learning and teaching programmes in school.

The **experiences and outcomes** are specific statements about a student's skills and knowledge in each area, arranged by curriculum level to provide a progression through the levels from **Early** to **Level 4**.

Here is an example from the Social Studies curriculum area. It refers to one of the subjects within

People, past events and societies				
Early	First	Second	Third	Fourth
I am aware that different types of evidence can help me to find out about the past. <b>SOC 0-01a</b>	I understand that evidence varies in the extent to which it can be trusted and can use this in learning about the past. <b>SOC 1-01a</b>	I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past. <b>SOC 2-01a</b>	I can use my knowledge of a historical period to interpret the evidence and present an informed view. <b>SOC 3-01a</b>	I can evaluate conflicting sources of evidence to sustain a line of argument. <b>SOC 4-01a</b>

**Social Studies; People, past events and societies.**

The code letters SOC refer to **Social Studies** and the numbers 0, 1, 2 etc refer to the curriculum level. This particular set of outcomes is coded with the number -01 because it is the first of 22 sets of statements under **Social Studies experiences and outcomes**. Some sets of statements contain

one statement per level, like this one, and others contain several related statements per level.

People, place and environment (continued)				
Early	First	Second	Third	Fourth
While learning outdoors in differing weathers, I have described and recorded the weather, its effects and how it makes me feel and can relate my recordings to the seasons. <b>SOC 0-12a</b>	By using a range of instruments, I can measure and record the weather and can discuss how weather affects my life. <b>SOC 1-12a</b>  By exploring climate zones around the world, I can compare and describe how climate affects living things. <b>SOC 1-12b</b>	By comparing my local area with a contrasting area outwith Britain, I can investigate the main features of weather and climate, discussing the impact on living things. <b>SOC 2-12a</b>	I can investigate the relationship between climate and weather to be able to understand the causes of weather patterns within a selected climate zone. <b>SOC 3-12a</b>	I can identify threats facing the main climate zones, including climate change, and analyse how these threats impact on the way of life. <b>SOC 4-12a</b>  I can carry out a geographical enquiry to assess the impact and possible outcomes of climate change on a selected region and can propose strategies to slow or reverse the impact. <b>SOC 4-12b</b>  I can demonstrate an understanding of weather and climate by explaining the relationship between weather and air pressure. <b>SOC 4-12c</b>

Subsequent statements are given the suffix letters -b, -c, -d, as below:

Teachers use the **experiences and outcomes** to inform them about what to teach students at each level in each curriculum area, and to assess when a student is secure in their learning.

When we create learning materials for schools we can use the **experiences and outcomes** to ensure that the materials are relevant to the curriculum and appropriate to the level at which they will be used.

The Curriculum for Excellence strongly encourages cross-curricular approaches, despite being organised in distinct subject areas. This means that a particular learning experience may address outcomes from several different subject areas, and use a range of learning approaches.

For example a learning activity about the First World War might use drama techniques to engage the students with archived letters from soldiers, leading to a writing or graphics activity in which they demonstrate what they have learned, culminating in an exhibition of work. **Experiences and outcomes** from the Social Studies, Expressive Arts and Languages areas are all addressed in this activity.

The **experiences and outcomes** for each subject area in the curriculum are set out in documents published by Education Scotland. They are available for download on the Education Scotland website at this address:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/index.asp>

This page also hosts an interactive tool for identifying **experiences and outcomes** that are relevant to a particular learning activity. There is a separate Brief Guide (#6) about how to use this tool.

The **experiences and outcomes** documents are also available for download on our website through our Education pages.



## SCA Brief Guide to the Scottish Curriculum

### Brief Guide #6: Using the My Experiences and Outcomes tool

The Education Scotland website hosts an interactive tool for identifying and printing relevant selections from the Curriculum for Excellence **experiences and outcomes** across all the subject areas. This is particularly useful when you create educational materials that have multiple links to the curriculum because you can collate the relevant **experiences and outcomes** into one simple chart to accompany your plan.

The tool is located at this address:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/index.asp> and it is called **My Experiences and Outcomes**.

When you open it you are invited to log in using a GLOW user name and password. This is useful but not essential if you don't have a GLOW identity. Using the tool without logging in means the site will not remember your activity and you must complete the task in one session.

**My Experiences and Outcomes** offers a 'save' option under each statement, enabling you to browse the **experiences and outcomes** and select out all those that relate to a particular learning

	EARLY ⓘ	FIRST ⓘ	SECOND ⓘ	THIRD ⓘ	FOURTH ⓘ
I am aware that different types of evidence can help me to find out about the past.	I understand that evidence varies in the extent to which it can be trusted and can use this in learning about the past.	I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past.	I can use my knowledge of a historical period to interpret the evidence and present an informed view.	I can evaluate conflicting sources of evidence to sustain a line of argument.	
<a href="#">More info on SOC 0-01a</a> 	<a href="#">More info on SOC 1-01a</a> 	<a href="#">More info on SOC 2-01a</a> 	<a href="#">More info on SOC 3-01a</a> 	<a href="#">More info on SOC 4-01a</a> 	
People, place and environment	People in society, economy and business	By exploring places, investigating artefacts and locating them in time, I have developed an awareness of the ways we remember and preserve Scotland's history.	I can interpret historical evidence from a range of periods to help to build a picture of Scotland's heritage and my sense of chronology.	I can make links between my current and previous studies, and show my understanding of how people and events have contributed to the development of the Scottish nation.	
All social studies outcomes	More information	<a href="#">SOC 0-02a</a> 	<a href="#">SOC 2-02a</a> 	<a href="#">SOC 3-02a</a> 	
Technologies		<a href="#">SOC 1-02a</a> 			
Responsibility of all				<a href="#">SOC 4-02a</a> 	

activity. Here is an example from the Social Studies curriculum:

You can browse different curriculum documents and combine **experiences and outcomes** from them, as appropriate to the educational activity you are working with and the curriculum level of the students for which the activity is intended.

When you have saved all the relevant **experiences and outcomes** click the **view and sort** link at the top of the page:

Your selected outcomes will be displayed as a chart  
which can be further edited it  
the **save to RTF** button at the upper right

You currently have **2 outcomes** saved.  
[View and sort your outcomes](#)

**Save to RTF**

in area      Group(s) used in

**outcomes** will then be displayed as a chart required. To download this chart click of the chart.

This downloads the chart as an RTF or *rich text file* to your computer which can be printed out, added to an existing document or converted to a PDF. Here is an example of a chart produced in this way showing outcomes from the Literacy, Religious and moral education, and Social studies curriculum areas.

#### My experiences and outcomes

Outcome statement	Curriculum area	Group(s) used in
To help me develop an informed view, I am learning to recognise the difference between fact and opinion.  LIT 1-08a * Responsibility of all	Literacy > Listening and talking > Understanding, analysing and evaluating	
I can describe the practices and traditions of Christianity and have considered the way these have influenced Scottish society.  RME 2-03c	Religious and moral education > Christianity > Practices and traditions	
I can use evidence to recreate the story of a place or individual of local historical interest.  SOC 1-03a	Social studies > People, past events and societies	
I can use primary and secondary sources selectively to research events in the past.  SOC 2-01a	Social studies > People, past events and societies	
I can discuss why people and events from a particular time in the past were important, placing them within a historical sequence.  SOC 2-06a	Social studies > People, past events and societies	
Having explored my local area, I can present information on different places to live, work and relax and interesting places to visit.  SOC 2-10a	Social studies > People, place and environment	