

National Improvement Framework – Specification Design Group

Contents

- Note of meeting 12 August 2015
- Email to group, including draft specification and agenda for 9 September 2015 meeting
- Excerpt from National Improvement Framework Decision Log
- List of organisations/individuals involved in Specification Design Group

Please note – all redactions herein are under section 38(1)(b) – personal data exemption under FOISA.

Design Specification Group – 12 August 2015

Overall comments

- Agreement on the production of a diagnostic assessment, which will drive improvement in the classroom and identify which children aren't being served by the system. The nuances of standardised and on-demand assessments were discussed and advice on these issues will be drawn out as the specification develops.
- The design of a new assessment would aim to reduce the assessment burden on teachers and pupils by bringing clarity, consistency and meeting the needs of its users.
- The governance of the National Improvement Framework lies with the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board – any advice and recommendations from this group would go the Management Board as well as Ministers.
- Committed to CfE assessment policy and any assessment would be trump the role of teacher judgement.
- The presentation of data at the different levels i.e. a dashboard, should be considered during the development of the specification.
- Discussion about the reporting of data and how it will be used – some local authorities do not currently report literacy and numeracy performance to Education Committees, therefore it would represent a huge step change locally and nationally. Further conversations are required.
- There is a significant role for comms, including clear articulation about what the Framework and assessment are there to do and what they are not there to do.

Assessment principles and design

- Initial focus on literacy and numeracy, aligned to CfE, specifically the skills and dispositions within the experiences and outcomes. In time, further consideration for other curricular areas.
- Some discussion around when to assess and linking to the CfE levels at P1, P4, P7 and S3 – LAs may require support for assessment in between these years.
- Timing – LAs should have a window to take the assessment, towards the end of the school year.
- The assessment should be online and adaptive, ideally standardised against age.
- The assessment should take consider accessibility and compatibility issues, including computers Vs tablets.
- Length of time for assessments varies according to age and it may not be possible to prescribe how the assessment is administered in schools.
- Training will be required in how teachers can use the data and there is a role for Education Scotland and local authority representatives in supporting this.

At the meeting, the following was agreed:

- Invite trade union representatives to the group (SG);
- Share details of the draft Framework with the Group (SG);
- Share what a dashboard could look like (SG);
- Share feedback on specifications and features of assessments (LAs);
- Volunteers to develop a draft specification in advance of the next meeting on 9 September (All).

EMAIL TO DESIGN SPECIFICATION GROUP

From: [SG official - redacted – 38(1)(b)]

Sent: Tuesday, September 08, 2015 02:11 PM

To: sutherlanda@northlan.gov.uk <sutherlanda@northlan.gov.uk>; lengd@stirling.gov.uk

<lengd@stirling.gov.uk>; mark.ratter@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

<mark.ratter@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk>; pvestri@eastlothian.gov.uk

<pvestri@eastlothian.gov.uk>; sue.ellis@strath.ac.uk <sue.ellis@strath.ac.uk>;

ggorman@aberdeencity.gov.uk <ggorman@aberdeencity.gov.uk>;

Gheners779@ea.dumgal.sch.uk <Gheners779@ea.dumgal.sch.uk>; [personal email address

redacted – 38(1)(b)]; robertn@cosla.gov.uk <robertn@cosla.gov.uk>; h.martin@abdn.ac.uk

<h.martin@abdn.ac.uk>; Bell D (Donna); Logan G (Graeme); MacDougall A (Audrey); [3 SG

officials names redacted – 38(1)(b)]; Gw08hendersonginette@ea.dumgal.sch.uk

<Gw08hendersonginette@ea.dumgal.sch.uk>; squinn@eis.org.uk <squinn@eis.org.uk>;

[personal email address redacted – 38(1)(b)]; [SG official - redacted – 38(1)(b)]; Robertson F

(Fiona) (HMIE)

Cc: [3 SG officials names redacted – 38(1)(b)]

Subject: National Improvement Framework - Design Specification Group

Dear All,

Please find attached the papers for tomorrow's meeting. I am pleased to be able to attach the first draft of the national assessment specification for your comment and inputs. You will note there are a number of blanks and we have posed some key questions where we'd welcome your views. Our general aim is to produce a specification that sets out the parameters of the task without being completely prescriptive in order to enable potential contractors to develop their ideas of how we could deliver and we would also welcome your views on that approach.

The meeting will start at 2pm and will last approximately 2 hours. It will be held at:

Scottish Government
Victoria Quay
Leith
EH6 6QQ

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks,

[SG official - redacted – 38(1)(b)]

Strategy and Performance Unit

Learning Directorate

[SG official phone number - redacted – 38(1)(b)]

Tell us how to make Scottish education even better:

www.engageforeducation.org

Attachments:

- 1) **DRAFT SPECIFICATION FOR AN ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**
- 2) **DESIGN SPECIFICATION GROUP AGENDA – 9 SEPTEMBER 2015**

ATTACHMENT 1:

DRAFT SPECIFICATION FOR AN ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT THE NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Introduction

[to be added]

Background

[to be added]

Aims

We wish to commission the development of a standardised assessment for the Scottish school education system. The assessment will be aligned with Curriculum for Excellence.

The primary aim of the assessment is to provide information as part of a range of evidence to support teachers in using the flexibility in CfE to ensure the learning mix they provide meets the needs of all pupils. The information provided can be used to inform, alongside wider evidence, professional judgement on achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. At a school level it will provide schools with a measure to help them analyse how well the system is serving all children equally.

In addition, the assessment will provide information, as part of a larger dataset that can be analysed at a school, local and national level to provide information on

- attainment,
- trends over time,
- longitudinal measures of pupil progress,
- attainment linked with key national data on socio-economic groups and other pupil characteristics

The assessment should be available for use for all pupils in Scotland [to be discussed – special schools and independent schools] in P1, P4, P7 and S3 from spring 2017 onwards.

Objectives

Phase 1 – development

1. Develop assessment materials for numeracy, reading and writing for P1, P4, P7 and S3 pupils
2. Develop an online assessment to deliver these materials to pupils
3. Test and pilot the assessment as required, including with the 7 local authorities involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge¹ in 2016.

Phase 2 - delivery

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Raisingeducationalattainment>

4. Make the assessment and support for teachers available to all participating schools initially sometime in the period March-May 2017 and then on an annual basis. This will include all administration associated with delivery and completion of the assessment.
5. Provide agreed data and reports to teachers, schools, local authorities, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland on an annual basis. The assessment needs to be able to provide results at a pupil, school and authority level
6. Review the assessment on an annual basis from 2017 onwards. Obtain regular feedback from users and make adjustments to support and materials in response to that feedback.

Phase 3

7. Develop the assessment for Gaelic Medium Education and, potentially, wider aspects of Writing
8. Develop the assessment for other curricular areas.

The length of the contract will be x years.

More detail on each of these objectives is set out in the sections below.

Objective 1 - Develop assessment materials

The assessment should cover the following curriculum areas, reflecting the knowledge, skills and understanding of the Experiences and Outcomes and Significant Aspects of Learning at CfE early, first, second and both third and fourth level for S3.

The content of the assessment should be levelled against the standards set out within the experiences and outcomes and be able to assess if a child is working at that level or above or below the content knowledge expected at that level.

Numeracy - [content needs to be added on what the assessment should assess for numeracy].

Reading - [content needs to be added on what the assessment should assess for reading. Text currently included is illustrative]. This should include the ability to: engage with a range of increasingly complex texts; apply knowledge and understanding about language; find and use information; and understand, analyse and evaluate texts. Assessments should not only measure basic literacy skills but include questions to demonstrate children and young people's advanced reading skills (for example, higher level comprehension skills such as analysis and evaluation). The assessment should include aspects of reading engagement. We also separately require a functional reading age test for P7 pupils.

Writing – [content needs to be added on what the assessment should assess for writing. Text currently included is illustrative.] In writing, relevant key themes will include the ability to apply knowledge and understanding about language. We recognise the challenges in delivering an assessment that looks at broader aspects of writing, in particular the ability to create texts of increasing complexity using more sophisticated language. It is possible this could be delivered in a phased way, for example the assessment initially could assess the knowledge children have around the tools for writing such as spelling and grammar and so on and then later include elements around assessing pieces of writing. Tenderers should put forward ideas for the assessment of writing and how this can be delivered.

[QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION: WHAT SHOULD THE ASSESSMENT BE ASSESSING? WHAT LEVEL OF DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR THE SPECIFICATION?]

In developing the assessment, we expect the contractor to engage with teachers, the sector more widely and education experts including Education Scotland. Tenders should set out plans for how the assessments will be developed and how they will engage with practitioners in this phase of the project.

We expect regular meetings with a range of stakeholders , Scottish Government, Education Scotland to discuss aspects of the assessment.. An online group can be created for the sharing of assessment items and discussion. A reference group should be set up for annual review and development of the assessment to monitor and advise on changes.

Objective 2 – Develop the Assessment

The Assessment should be:

- Online.
- Adaptive to pupil responses, although we recognise this may take more development time.
- Accessible. Guidance should be provided on the use of the assessment for pupils with Additional Support Needs.
- Equitable. The assessment should be able to fairly assess all pupils, no matter their background, experience or level of ability.
- Have a pupil friendly multimedia interface that guides them through the assessment process without the need for close supervision. This should allow the assessment to be administered to a number of pupils at the same time. We recognise this will need to vary depending on stage of pupil and is a particular challenge for P1 pupils. Tenders should set out proposals for how the assessment can be tailored to meet the needs of younger pupils.
- Able to deliver pupil level diagnostic results to pupils and teachers in near-real time.
- Available in English. The assessment will also need to be made available for pupils in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) but we recognise the challenges associated with this requirement. Tenders should provide proposals for timescales for introducing the assessment to pupils in GME.
- Compatible with a variety of IT facilities as used by schools.
- Provide the facility for pupil characteristic data to be matched to pupil results. This will include use of the Scottish Candidate Number for all pupils.
- [more??]

Assessment scoring

The methodology for scoring the assessment needs to fulfil the key aims for the assessment.

For pupils, teachers, schools and parents, the assessment needs to be diagnostic – it should provide an automatic report on how an individual pupil has got on, their strengths and areas of development. This should also be provided for the class directly after the class had individually completed the assessment. This information/data will provide the teacher with information on areas of strength and areas for development for individual pupils and whole cohorts of children. This will enable immediate support to be put in place to extend or support a child. It will also provide high quality information to support teachers in reporting to parents. It will need to provide easily comprehensible information which breaks down performance in specific organisers in both literacy and numeracy which can be used diagnostically to prompt intervention. It should provide information which supports strategies for closing the attainment gap.

For local authorities, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland, the assessment needs to provide performance information. It should provide a simple, although not necessarily a single, measure for each stage for each of numeracy, reading and writing which can be used, alongside teacher judgement, as an indicator of school, local authority and national performance in these

areas. The measure should encompass all pupils who have taken part in the assessment. The measures should be able to be broken down by pupil characteristic (for example to demonstrate the performance gap between pupils in the most deprived and least deprived areas). They should be able to be used to demonstrate year on year changes in performance and, in time, to produce longitudinal assessment data.

The key measures of improvement set out in the National Improvement Framework are:

- The percentage of children in P1 who are achieving CfE early level in reading, writing and numeracy
- The percentage of children in P4 who are achieving CfE first level in reading, writing and numeracy
- The percentage of children in P7 who are achieving CfE second level in reading, writing and numeracy
- The percentage of young people in S3 who are achieving CfE third level in reading, writing and numeracy.

- The percentage point gap between pupils in SIMD quintile 1 (pupils in the 20% most deprived areas) and all other pupils (SIMD quintiles 2-5, pupils in the other 80% of areas) in terms of their attainment in each of the P1, P4, P7 and S3 measures
- The percentage of pupils in each SIMD quintile (1-5) achieving the measures.

The following attainment measures are also included but not within the scope of the assessment:

- The percentage of school leavers achieving SCQF level 4 or better in literacy and in numeracy
- The percentage of school leavers achieving SCQF level 5 or better in literacy and in numeracy.

- The percentage of school leavers in each SIMD quintile in a sustained positive destination.

Tenders should set out how the design and scoring of the assessment will fulfil these needs.

Objective 3 – testing and piloting

The assessment will be required to be tested and piloted prior to full introduction. We intend that the seven local authorities involved in the Scottish Attainment Challenge should be involved in this process, although not exclusively, and expect that it should take place during 2016. It is intended that this is a testing process, not a full use of the assessment or a data collection exercise.

Tenders should set out proposals for how the assessment will be tested and piloted.

Objective 4 – delivery of the assessment

The assessment should be available for use in schools across Scotland in spring 2017 and in every subsequent year.

The assessment should be taken by all pupils within a specified window of time, expected to be around 3-4 weeks.

It is our belief that in order to fulfil the reporting requirements set out in objective 5 below, the assessment window will need to be sometime in March-May of each year. Tenders should set out proposals for when the assessment should be taken and when results/data can be delivered to different elements of the system in order to fulfil the reporting and data needs set out below.

Support to teachers and schools

We require teachers to be provided with standardised support on how to carry out the assessment with pupils.

[QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION – WHAT TYPES AND NATURE OF SUPPORT ARE REQUIRED? SUGGESTIONS INCLUDE WRITTEN GUIDANCE, A HELPLINE, GLOW BROADCASTS, ONLINE VIDEO TUTORIALS WITH TRANSCRIPTS.]

Guidance should also be provided on the interpretation of the results of the assessment and how they can be used to support the learning of all pupils and the closing of the attainment gap.

The contractor should provide training to Education Scotland staff on the interpretation of results. This would be at class teacher level, head-teacher level and authority level. This would be on an annual basis. The contractor should host a telephone enquiry line to support Education Scotland staff and practitioners. Following the training Education Scotland staff will use this information to develop data literacy pack for teachers, heads and LA staff to support translating the information into actions which will impact positively on learners. The aim for teachers is to understand and analyse the information alongside professional knowledge and up-to-date research.

IT support should be provided. This may be a particular requirement in the first year. Tenderers should provide information on how they will manage the variety in IT systems and capacity across the school estate. Contingency plans for delivery if a significant number of schools are unable to perform the assessment due to IT facilities should also be included in the tender.

Administration

[this section to be developed]

Information on participation and uptake of the assessment should be provided to the Scottish Government.

Objective 5 – reporting

Different report requirements for the results of the assessment apply at different levels of the system.

- Teachers/Schools

The assessment should provide quick/real time information to teachers on pupil performance, as set out in the scoring section above. Class and year group level data should be made available in a standardised format within a short period after all pupils have completed the assessment. Information should be provided in a form that will facilitate feedback to pupils and parents.

The data will provide information as part of a range of evidence to contribute to teachers professional judgement on achievement of a level. Schools will require class and year group level data.

- Parents

The tender should set out proposals for how teachers and schools can deliver parental feedback in an informative, accessible and helpful format.

- Local authorities

Local authorities should receive school and local authority level data by stage in a standardised reporting format. Local authorities should have the ability to link the data into existing tracking arrangements.

Local authorities will require full detailed reports from the assessment at school and LA level to be available by early summer.

- Scottish Government and Education Scotland

The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will require pupil level data that can be matched to pupil census data to allow national level analysis by September of each year in order for results to be published in an annual report in December of each year. [to be added – what are the respective roles here.]

[QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION – WHAT DATA/REPORTS DO TEACHERS, SCHOOLS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES NEED AND WHEN DO THEY NEED IT BY?]

Objective 6 – annual updating

It is expected that the assessment materials will require to be reviewed on an annual basis. The Contractor will be expected to engage with the sector to generate feedback on the assessment and make changes to the assessment materials, the assessment, and delivery and support mechanisms in response to feedback.

Some materials from the assessment will be required for “item release” – using some questions for illustration to the sector, media and in reporting. This means that some of the material will need to be replaced on a regular basis.

Objectives 7 and 8 – further development of the assessment

The development of the assessment for GME and further aspects of writing are discussed in objectives 1 and 2 above.

[to be added – text on assessing other curricular areas]

Ownership

[this section to be developed]

The assessment and all associated materials together with all data generated by the assessment will be owned by the Scottish Government.

Governance

[this section to be developed]

The project will be overseen by a steering group.

The contractor will be required to meet with the Scottish Government on a x-monthly basis during the development phase of the contract. From autumn 2017 onwards meetings should be on a x-monthly basis.

The contractor will be required to provide frequent written progress reports until autumn 2017.

Other

[sections to be added on requirements for tender, assessing bids, transitions between contracts etc. etc.]

ANNEX – EXTRACT FROM DRAFT FRAMEWORK

The role of standardised assessment for the Framework

Almost all local authorities use standardised assessment – but they use different approaches which makes sharing amongst local authorities and schools to help bring about improvement difficult, and collecting information and analysis at a national level unreliable.

To ensure a greater degree of consistency in the information and data in the Framework the Scottish Government is working with teachers, local government and other partners to commission a new Scottish standardised assessment. This will provide a diagnostic child level assessment, which will help teachers to drive forward improvement by identifying children's strengths and areas for development. This new, streamlined assessment will focus on aspects of reading, writing and numeracy. These are essential elements within Curriculum for Excellence and will support the skills children need to succeed. The new standardised assessment will also aim to reduce the overall burden for teachers and children.

From 2017, teacher judgement will be informed by the new national assessment – this will ensure more consistency and reliability. Aspects of this assessment will be piloted in the 7 local authorities taking part in the Scottish Attainment Challenge during 2016 and used by all local authorities from 2017.

Consideration will be given to the nature and type of assessment, to ensure that it reflects the different age and stage of children. For example:

- **At P1** a short assessment will focus on a range of early reading, writing and numeracy skills. For example, recognising sounds, letters and common words. In numeracy this could include ordering numbers and grouping of 2D shapes and 3D objects.
- **At P4** the assessment will focus on a greater range of reading and writing. For example, using a variety of punctuation and sentence structures to convey meaning and using strategies to spell familiar and unfamiliar words. In numeracy this could include rounding numbers, relative size of fractions and using scales for measurement including time.
- **At P7** more advanced reading and writing skills will be assessed. For example, answering literal, inferential and evaluative questions about a text and using a range of spelling strategies to ensure writing is accurate. In numeracy this could include multiples and factors of numbers and relationship between fractional numbers, decimal fractions and percentages.
- **At S3** the final assessment before young people complete the broad general education and move into the senior phase will focus on advanced literacy and numeracy skills. For example, recognising persuasive techniques and evaluating the reliability and relevance of sources with increasing independence. In numeracy this could include prime numbers, effect of operations on fractional and negative numbers and proportion.

The new standardised assessment will help to support teachers as part of their approach to assessing children's progress. The assessment results should not be considered in isolation –

they are only one part of the story of a child's progress in learning. The assessment results will be one of a range of sources of evidence that teachers will consider when judging if a child has achieved a Curriculum for Excellence level in literacy and numeracy. As well as assessment results, this evidence could include, for example, on-going classwork, written work in jotters, observations and presentations. No one source of evidence will override teacher judgements on when children achieve Curriculum for Excellence levels. These judgements will continue to be quality assured through moderation at local and national level.

Learning lessons

We want to learn lessons from previous approaches to gathering and publishing school performance data, as well as from those countries where high-stakes testing is used to judge the effectiveness of schools. Particular attention will be given to identifying and addressing any unintended effects of assessment activity so that the results of the new assessment are used diagnostically and to bring improvements for children

ATTACHMENT 2: AGENDA 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

National Improvement Framework Design Specification Group

Wednesday 9 September 2015

AGENDA

1. Welcome and matters arising
2. Update on the National Improvement Framework:
 - Programme for Government/Draft Framework launch
 - Engagement events
3. New assessment – Draft specification
4. Dashboard development
5. AOB

Excerpt from National Improvement Framework Decision Log

'Copy of NIF Programme - PMO - Meetings - SRO20160204- 1.1 - Actions' - <https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk/documents/A13457065/details>

National Improvement Framework Decision Log

Key Decisions and Notes

10-Sep-15	1	Spec meeting - 9 September- very positive meeting - some questions around scoring and timing. Draft will be developed for comments Monday next week. Spec needs to take account of ASL and ESOL
-----------	---	---

List of organisations/individuals involved in Specification Design Group

A Sutherland - North Lanarkshire Council
David Leng - Stirling Council
Mark Ratter - East Renfrewshire Council
P Vestri - East Lothian Council
Sue Ellis - University of Strathclyde
Gayle Gorman - Aberdeen City Council
Ginette Henderson - Dumfries and Galloway Council
Robert Nicol - CoSLA
H Martin - Aberdeen University
S Quinn - EIS
Ian Ellis - National Parent Forum for Scotland
P J Morgan
Donna Bell, Audrey MacDougall - Scottish Government
Graeme Logan - Education Scotland