

CfE Benchmarks: Frequently-asked Questions

Questions	Answers
<p>1. Does a learner have to achieve all Benchmarks to achieve a level?</p>	<p>In order to achieve a CfE level, it is not necessary for learners to demonstrate mastery of every individual aspect of learning in the Benchmarks for that level. However, it is important that there are no major gaps in children’s and young people’s learning when looking across the major organisers in each curriculum area.</p>
<p>2. What is the timeframe for implementation of the Benchmarks across all curriculum areas? What are the expectations of HMI?</p>	<p>In ELC settings and primary schools, the introduction of Benchmarks for ‘other curriculum areas’ needs to be proportionate and manageable. Teachers and other practitioners should be given time to engage in professional discussion to become familiar with the Benchmarks for ‘other curriculum areas’, and start to use them in line with their school improvement plans.</p> <p>Secondary school departments are expected to be engaging with the Benchmarks for their area of the curriculum. Secondary teachers need to be clear about what CfE level young people have attained in order to inform decisions about National Qualifications in the senior phase. They are expected to be using the Benchmarks for their subject areas to ensure better understanding of standards, and in particular to ensure suitably challenging learning from S1 to S3 which prepares young people for N5 in S4.</p>
<p>3. Why are all ES and Os not included in the Benchmarks documents?</p>	<p>For Expressive Arts and RME only, some Es and Os are not included in the Benchmarks documents. This is because these specific Es and Os focus mainly on experiences and do not make reference to outcomes that can be assessed. See below for the Es and Os in question.</p> <p>Expressive Arts: EXA 0-01a / EXA 1-01a / EXA 2-01a / EXA 3-01a / EXA 3-01b / EXA 4-01a.</p> <p>RME: 1-08a to 4-08a.</p>

<p>4. Why have the 'significant aspects of learning' (SALs) been removed?</p>	<p>Benchmarks draw together and streamline a wide range of previous assessment guidance (including significant aspects of learning, progression frameworks and annotated exemplars) into one key resource to support teachers' and other practitioners' professional judgement of children's and young people's progress across all curriculum areas.</p> <p>We know that many schools found the SALs useful in developing progression frameworks to support detailed planning for learning, teaching and assessment. Although the SALs have been superseded, many schools still have the physical education (PE) SALs posters on display, and teachers continue to find them very helpful.</p>
<p>5. There have been big QAMSO events to support understanding of the Benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. Will there be the same for other areas of the curriculum?</p>	<p>There are currently no plans to have QAMSO events for 'other curriculum areas' as there have been for literacy and numeracy. Education Scotland has been working with a number of local authorities and subject networks to support practitioners in using the Benchmarks for 'other curriculum areas' and will continue to offer similar support for local authorities, and through the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives.</p>
<p>6. Are the QAMSOs able to help me with moderation and Benchmarks in my curriculum area?</p>	<p>The moderation cycle works in exactly the same way in other curriculum areas as it does in literacy and numeracy, and Benchmarks are part of the cycle. Depending on local circumstances, QAMSOs may be able to help practitioners with moderation in all curriculum areas. Numeracy QAMSOs include science and design and technology teachers. If a practitioner needs help to understand the standards described in the Benchmarks, this should be done as part of school or local authority moderation arrangements.</p>
<p>7. As a secondary teacher, how can I get help to support me to use Benchmarks in an area I teach that is not my specialism?</p>	<p>It is the responsibility of schools and local authorities to ensure that staff are appropriately supported in delivering and assessing any curricular area they teach. Practitioners should seek support from their school leadership team to support them in engaging with relevant professional learning to ensure that learners receive their entitlement to high-quality learning and robust assessment processes.</p>

<p>8. What sort of documents should I use at moderation meetings?</p>	<p>Moderation is an ongoing process. It is not the same as cross-marking or verification. Effective moderation is where teachers work together to plan learning, teaching and assessment, to review evidence of learners' progress and achievement, and to plan next steps in learning.</p> <p>For effective moderation to take place, staff are likely to refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences and Outcomes • Planning folders • Observations of day to day learning within the classroom • Observation and feedback from learning activities that take place in other environments, for example, outdoors. • Coursework, including tests • Learning conversations • Planned periodic holistic assessment • Practical investigations • Projects • Jotter work <p>Further guidance can be found at the following links.</p> <p>National Improvement Hub https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/The%20Moderation%20Cycle</p> <p>Moderation Hub on Glow https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/PLC/moderationhub/SitePages/Home.aspx</p>
<p>9. How will the Benchmarks help me ensure that learners make appropriate choices and are presented at an appropriate level for National Qualifications in the senior phase?</p>	<p>Schools need to make judgments about the most appropriate senior phase pathway for each learner. These decisions must be informed by effective tracking and monitoring of learners' progress through the Broad General Education (BGE). A clear understanding of the curriculum level achieved, or that a learner is working at, in each subject area at the end of BGE is a critical piece of information to inform this decision and to ensure a smooth progression in learning for all learners as they move into the</p>

	<p>senior phase. Decisions should also be informed by discussions with parents and learners about the range of pathways open to young people. Effective use of the Benchmarks should support all of these steps.</p>
<p>10. Are we expected to report nationally on CfE levels for curriculum areas other than literacy and numeracy?</p>	<p>Current arrangements for reporting on all areas of the curriculum by schools at local level should be maintained.</p> <p>All schools are expected to report on curriculum level achievement for literacy and numeracy, and data will be collected and collated for reporting at national level. For the purposes of national reporting, schools are not currently expected to report on CfE levels for any other areas of the curriculum.</p> <p>For ELC settings and primary schools, this will not necessarily mean using Benchmarks as yet for all areas to inform reporting at local level. ELC settings and primary schools are expected to be using the Benchmarks for literacy and numeracy currently, to become familiar with the Benchmarks for 'other curriculum areas', and start to use them in line with their school improvement plans.</p>
<p>11. I am a single member of department, teaching up to 200 pupils a week. What approach should I take to assessing and monitoring progress for each pupil?</p>	<p>It is important to keep workload manageable in any context. However, practitioners still need to ensure that learners are making progress and that progress can be meaningfully reported on. If practitioners feel that that they need support to use the Benchmarks and monitor progress, they should seek advice at school and/or local authority level. Cluster and subject networking can be considered to allow practitioners to discuss learners' progress with other colleagues working across the BGE.</p>
<p>12. Will Education Scotland be publishing examples of holistic assessments for different subject areas, showing how literacy and numeracy Benchmarks can be assessed in subject areas?</p>	<p>Education Scotland will not be producing examples of holistic assessments. Having national banks of holistic assessments does not reflect the distinct nature of learning needs at local level.</p>
<p>13. What are my responsibilities with regard to assessing literacy and numeracy if I teach subjects other than mathematics or English in secondary</p>	<p>Teachers of all curriculum areas and subjects have a responsibility to understand literacy and numeracy standards in order to plan activities at the appropriate level, and thus help learners develop their skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. All teachers should know the levels of literacy and numeracy of each of their pupils, so</p>

school?	that they do not provide work that has literacy or numeracy content that is either too easy or too difficult for the pupil. Teachers of areas other than mathematics and English need to understand literacy and numeracy standards so they can give appropriate feedback to their pupils on how to improve.
14. Some secondary teachers of subjects other than English and mathematics are being asked by headteachers to report on their pupils' levels in literacy and numeracy? Should this be happening?	<p>Education Scotland would not expect secondary teachers of subjects other than English and mathematics to be asked to report on their pupils' achievement of a literacy or numeracy level. It is very unlikely that teachers of these subjects would have sufficient evidence to make that judgement.</p> <p>However, work produced across a range of curriculum areas can contribute to the range of evidence required to indicate achievement of a literacy or numeracy level, and in particular can provide evidence of application of literacy and numeracy skills.</p>

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A number of the frequently-asked questions correspond directly or indirectly to the key messages about ‘what to do’ and ‘what to avoid’, contained in the table in the introduction to every Benchmarks document. The key messages table is included below and the corresponding frequently-asked questions are indicated.

KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO DO	KEY MESSAGES – WHAT TO AVOID
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use literacy and numeracy Benchmarks to help monitor progress towards achievement of a level, and to support overall professional judgement of when a learner has achieved a level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid undue focus on individual Benchmarks which may result in over-assessing or recording of learners’ progress.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become familiar with other curriculum area Benchmarks over time. <i>(The answer to frequently-asked question 2 relates to this key message).</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid the requirement to spend time collating excessive evidence to assess learners’ achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use Benchmarks to help assess whether learners are making suitable progress towards the national standards expected and use the evidence to plan their next, challenging steps in learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no need to provide curriculum level judgements in all curriculum areas – stick to literacy and numeracy. <i>(The answers to frequently-asked questions 2 & 10 relate to this key message).</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss Benchmarks within and across schools to achieve a shared understanding of the national standards expected across curriculum areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not create excessive or elaborate approaches to monitoring and tracking. <i>(The answer to frequently-asked question 11 relates to this key message).</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not assess Benchmarks individually. Plan periodic, holistic assessment of children’s and young people’s learning. <i>(The answer to frequently asked question 12 relates to this key message).</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not tick off individual Benchmarks.