

## **Benchmarks for literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How can the Benchmarks support practitioners in professional decisions about achievement of a level?**

Assessment data for literacy and numeracy is now being collected at national level. Teachers use their professional judgement to assess the attainment of pupils at the end of P1, P4, P7 and S3. The Benchmark statements are the minimum requirements for achievement of a level and will inform professional judgement. They support greater consistency and ensure that the same standards are being applied across the country when making assessment judgements.

### **There are changes to some of the Benchmarks in the final document. How were the final Benchmarks developed and agreed?**

The Benchmarks for numeracy and mathematics and literacy and English were published in draft form in August 2016. They were published in draft to allow practitioners an extended period in which engage with the Benchmarks in practice and then, to offer feedback. Between the publication of the draft Benchmarks and the final document, there was a full 7 month period of extensive engagement with professionals from around Scotland. This involved an online feedback tool as well as face to face meetings and correspondence via email with individuals and groups of practitioners. Practitioners from across the early years, primary, secondary and independent sectors participated as well as students in initial teacher education programmes and local authority staff. Changes were made to ensure the Benchmarks are clear, concise and as specific as possible, to support teachers as they use their professional judgement to determine achievement of a level.

### **Is there not a risk of the Benchmarks turning the curriculum into a tick-box exercise?**

No. [The achievement of a level poster](#) describes how the Experiences and Outcomes are used to plan learning and teaching experiences and the Benchmarks are used for assessment purposes. [The CfE Statement](#) (Aug 2016) advises practitioners to focus planning on the main learning activities developed from the Experiences and Outcomes, and to group these together in ways which best suit learners. Benchmarks should be used to review a body of evidence to determine if the standard has been achieved. It is not necessary for learners to demonstrate evidence of every aspect of learning within the Benchmarks before moving on to the next level. However, it is important that this is interpreted in ways which ensure no major gaps in children's and young people's learning, for example, with respect to the relevant organisers in each curriculum area.

### **What do the Benchmarks replace?**

The Benchmarks streamline and embed a wide range of existing assessment guidance, including significant aspects of learning, progression frameworks, annotated exemplification and the national assessment resource (NAR), into one key resource to support teachers' professional judgement.

### **How should the Benchmarks be used?**

The Benchmarks describe the standards that children and young people need to meet to achieve a level. Assessment is an on-going process to support learning. The Benchmarks should be used to help monitor progress towards achievement of a level and to support overall professional judgement of when a learner has achieved a curriculum level. They support professional dialogue, moderation and monitoring of progress in learning.

The Benchmarks:

- support professional assessment judgements;
- describe what learners know and are able to do at the end of a level – outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills;
- describe the **minimum** requirement;
- are used for assessment purposes, planning is done using the Experiences and Outcomes.

**There is a section at the front of the numeracy and mathematics document about skills. What is the purpose of this section?**

The eight numeracy and mathematical skills are embedded in the Es and Os and apply across all organisers and all levels. Assessment judgements are based on a body of evidence which includes evidence of the numeracy and mathematical skills. It is not possible to create Benchmarks for these skills as they are relevant across all levels and relate to the content specified in the Benchmarks. The document provides an outline of the key features of each skill.

**There is no mention of play in the early level Benchmarks for numeracy and mathematics. – why is this?**

The Benchmarks state what learners need to know and be able to do to achieve a level. They do not describe how concepts should be taught – no particular methodology is promoted – this is not the role of the Benchmarks. The Benchmarks describe the outcome, not the experience. The Experiences and Outcomes are used to plan the learning experience and are worded to include guidance on the type of learning experience that should be offered.

Further guidance on approaches to learning and teaching can be found in [Building the Curriculum 2](#) and [Building the Curriculum 3](#). In generic terms, as described in BtC2, at early level in particular, there will be an emphasis on learning through play and the use of concrete materials. However, in terms of progression, the idea of moving from concrete hands-on experiences through to visual and finally abstract methods can apply at any level, especially where a new concept is being introduced. When planning learning experiences, care should be taken to reflect the 7 principles of curriculum design. It is very important that, where possible, learning is planned around a meaningful context where learners can see the relevance of the numeracy and mathematics. [Building the Curriculum 5](#) provides the framework for assessment which includes the key messages on what, when and how we assess.

**What does the term texts include in the literacy and English Benchmarks?**

Texts include the wider definition of texts as outlined in the Literacy and English Principles and Practice Paper. Texts not only include those presented in traditional written or print form, but also oral, digital and film texts. They also include Scottish texts and texts in Scots language. Challenge in literacy and English involves engaging with a wide range of increasingly complex texts which are suitable to the reading age of each learner.

Both the Experiences and Outcomes and the Benchmarks are written in an inclusive way which allows teachers to interpret them for the needs of individual children and young people who use Braille, sign language and other forms of communication.