

Curriculum for Wales: revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills;
Mathematical Development; English;
Welsh (first language); mathematics



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Frequently asked questions

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Curriculum for Wales: revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study

Audience	Foundation Phase practitioners; headteachers and teachers in primary, secondary and special schools; Welsh local authorities and regional consortia; teacher unions and representative bodies; tutors in initial teacher training; governors and other interested stakeholders in Wales.
Overview	<p>This document gives a variety of answers to frequently asked questions covering elements of the Phase 1 review of curriculum and assessment, to include the revised Areas of Learning (Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, and Mathematical Development), programmes of study (English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics) from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4, assessment, new GCSEs and Professor Donaldson's independent review.</p> <p>It will assist schools and settings to understand the revisions for implementation from September 2015.</p>
Action required	None – for information only.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: LNF Implementation Branch Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Cathays Park Cardiff CF10 3NQ e-mail: curriculumdivision@wales.gsi.gov.uk
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's Learning Wales website at www.learning.wales.gov.uk
Related documents	<i>Curriculum for Wales: revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study – information document</i> (2014); <i>Curriculum for Wales: revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study – Glossary of terms</i> (2014); Language, Literacy and Communication Skills Area of Learning; Mathematical Development Area of Learning; Key Stage 2 English Programme of Study; Key Stage 3 English Programme of Study; Key Stage 4 English Programme of Study; Rhaglen Astudio Cyfnod Allweddol 2 Cymraeg; Rhaglen Astudio Cyfnod Allweddol 3 Cymraeg; Rhaglen Astudio Cyfnod Allweddol 4 Cymraeg; Key Stage 2 Mathematics Programme of Study; Key Stage 3 Mathematics Programme of Study; Key Stage 4 Mathematics Programme of Study.

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Review of curriculum and assessment – Areas of Learning (Language, Literacy and Communication Skills, and Mathematical Development) and programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics

Why have you changed the Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development, and the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics?

In October 2012, the Welsh Government began a process of reviewing elements of the curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales to ensure that the curriculum and assessment arrangements were consistent with the expectations of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). The consultation is available on the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations/education/nlnf/?status=closed&lang=en.

In March 2014, following a consultation on general principles the previous autumn, consultees strongly supported embedding literacy and numeracy in the language and mathematics areas of the curriculum, but there was a broad range of responses to other proposals. We concluded that we should:

- revise the Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development, and the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics in readiness for statutory implementation in September 2015 (this led to Phase 1)
- conduct a comprehensive, independent review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales – this is being taken forward by Professor Graham Donaldson.

When did Welsh Government consult on the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study?

In March 2014, Welsh Government held a consultation on:

- proposals for new Areas of Learning for:
 - Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
 - Mathematical Development

- new programmes of study for Key Stages 2 to 4 for:
 - English
 - Welsh (first language)
 - mathematics
- non-statutory additions to the LNF.

We held a series of four consultation events across Wales, at which stakeholders were invited to discuss the proposals in detail and provide direct feedback to the Welsh Government. The consultation closed in June 2014.

Our proposals were to strengthen the learning and teaching of literacy and numeracy in these Areas of Learning and programmes of study by complementing, and aligning them with, the approach taken in the LNF to create a continuum of learning. The LNF remains a statutory requirement across the whole curriculum for learners aged 5 to 14.

When will the new Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development, and the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics become statutory?

The new Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development, and the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics will become statutory in September 2015. This schedule will not be affected by the outcome of Professor Donaldson’s independent review.

What changes have been made?

The status of the LNF as a statutory cross-curricular requirement is **unaffected** by these developments.

There is no significant new content. The literacy and numeracy components of the LNF have been embedded within the Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and the Mathematical Development Areas of Learning and the English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics programmes of study.

The Areas of Learning and programmes of study have also been designed as an inclusive continuum of learning enabling progression for all learners. The Routes for Learning components for literacy and numeracy have also been revised.

The main changes are structural, in that the Areas of Learning and programmes of study set out year-on-year expectations, as per the LNF. They now encompass LNF statements. By way of formatting, we have distinguished the statements applicable to the LNF which can be applied across the curriculum in context.

The programmes of study also align with the GCSE specification content for the new qualifications for first delivery from September 2015.

What support will be available to implement the Areas of Learning and programmes of study?

There will be a package of support, including:

- an information booklet and an animated explainer to accompany the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study, which will help schools and settings prepare for implementation
- a programme of direct support delivered by the regional consortia providing schools and settings with the necessary information to implement the new Areas of Learning and programmes of study.

More information will follow in 2015.

How will the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study (level descriptions) be assessed?

Professor Donaldson's independent review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements will be reporting early in 2015.

On 9 October 2014, he gave an update to the Minister on progress. Within that update he signalled that his independent review is likely to mean 'significant' change in our curriculum and assessment arrangements – and that this change will need to be implemented over a fairly lengthy period of time.

We aim to cause minimum disruption and maximum consistency, and are exploring the best way to achieve this in the context of Professor Donaldson's independent review.

What about assessment against the other Areas of Learning and programmes of study?

For all other Areas of Learning and programmes of study, there is **no change** to the current assessment arrangements at this stage. These are being looked at by Professor Donaldson as part of his independent review.

How will Estyn inspect learning and teaching under the scope of the Areas of Learning and programmes of study?

Estyn has no preferred model for the way schools and settings implement the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study. Inspectors will judge the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their contribution to outcomes and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the judgements is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose of achieving high standards of work for all learners.

How do the Areas of Learning and programmes of study link with *Qualified for life: An education improvement plan for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*?

These link directly with *Qualified for life*, which sets out key aims up to 2020 and identifies strategic objectives that will help deliver improvements in the sector, focusing on a strong workforce, an engaging curriculum, internationally respected qualifications, and education leaders working together to drive up standards.

Assessment using the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF)

How do we assess the Areas of Learning and programmes of study against the LNF?

Formative assessment of the skills within the LNF was introduced as a statutory requirement in September 2014 for all learners aged 5 to 14. More information can be found on the Welsh Government's Learning Wales website at www.learning.wales.gov.uk/resources/browse-all/lmf-assessment-recording-reporting/?lang=en.

Ongoing formative assessment of the skills in the LNF will identify learners' progress as well as support classroom and curriculum planning. There is **no change** to this requirement following the introduction of the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study.

Professor Donaldson's independent review of assessment and the national curriculum

What is the focus of the Donaldson independent review of curriculum and assessment?

The independent review team led by Professor Donaldson was appointed by the Minister to undertake an independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements for Wales. He has been asked to articulate a clear, coherent vision for the national curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4, linking directly to our new qualifications system.

When will we know the outcome of the curriculum review?

Professor Donaldson's fundamental review of the national curriculum and assessment arrangements (including the basic curriculum) will report in early 2015 – following which the Welsh Government will set out its response, including timelines for taking action forward over time.

However, on 9 October 2014, Professor Donaldson gave an update to the Minister on progress. Within that update he signalled that his independent review is likely to mean 'significant' change in our curriculum and assessment arrangements – and that this change will need to be implemented over a fairly lengthy period of time.

The Welsh Government will engage with practitioners and school leaders to develop proposals for any new curriculum, and regular communications with schools will take place.

Any changes following Professor Donaldson's independent review may take some time to implement and given the urgency of raising standards in literacy and numeracy, we have decided to implement the changes to the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study as part of Phase 1 of the curriculum review. Given the timeframes suggested by Professor Donaldson, these revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study will be secure.

Qualifications

How does this fit with the new GCSEs?

The revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study will be introduced in September 2015 at the same time as the first teaching of new GCSEs in language and mathematics subjects. **This is entirely intentional** and presents a unique opportunity to align the development of revised curriculum and qualifications with the LNF. It also reflects our commitment to give learners the skills they need for a modern life and the jobs that are needed in our economy.

The content of the programmes of study for English, Welsh (first language) and mathematics reflect the content requirements for the revised GCSEs in:

- English Literature
- Welsh Literature

and new GCSEs in:

- English Language
- Welsh Language
- Mathematics
- Mathematics – Numeracy.

How will the revised Areas of Learning and programmes of study (statutory from September 2015) be aligned with the guidance and support we are receiving in readiness for the new GCSEs?

The new GCSEs will also be taught from September 2015. In readiness for this implementation we are:

- working with the regional consortia to provide support and new resources for teachers to enhance their capacity and ability – while we are focusing on Key Stage 4 teachers, the regional consortia are also identifying methods to spread the good practice and new techniques to other teachers to allow schools and teachers to work to support each other in order to create a self-improving system

- commissioning additional LNF support for teachers working with 2014–15 Year 9 learners as we recognise the need to support this particular cohort as they will be the first to embark on the new GCSEs – this will focus on supporting teachers with responsibility for literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and be part of the wider National Support Programme (NSP) for literacy and numeracy; the additional support will be developed and delivered in close consultation with the regional consortia, and with the WJEC, to ensure it complements and does not duplicate the work of the new dedicated GCSE advisors in each region.

Which new GCSEs were accredited in October 2014?

- GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy.
- GCSE Mathematics.
- GCSE English Literature.
- GCSE English Language.
- TGAU Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg/GCSE Welsh Literature.
- TGAU Cymraeg Iaith/GCSE Welsh Language.

Specifications are available to view on the WJEC's website at www.wjec.co.uk/supporting/wjec-qualifications-in-wales.html?language_id=1.

Foundation Phase

What changes have been made to the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning?

The Areas of Learning for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development are now presented in the revised format of year group expectations. The Welsh Government is committed to the Foundation Phase and the Minister for Education and Skills has made this commitment clear in his response to the stocktake of the Foundation Phase undertaken by Professor Iram Siraj in March 2014. Changes made are intended to ensure that:

- the emphasis is firmly on stage-appropriate provision in the Foundation Phase
- these Areas of Learning are a continuum of learning to allow practitioners to assess where a child currently is and what their 'next steps' should be – they are not a series of discrete skills to be learned and demonstrated each year, and the continuum layout helps practitioners/teachers identify individual strengths and areas for future developmental needs
- practitioners continue to be encouraged to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills through a balance of child-led and adult-focused active learning and play-based experiences as well as making the most of planned and spontaneous learning opportunities. That's why we've added a revised Foundation Phase pedagogy range of statements at the beginning of each Area of Learning. The revised Areas of Learning and the LNF do **not** mean a return to whole-class teaching of literacy and numeracy in the Foundation Phase.

What is happening with the Foundation Phase Profile assessment?

The Foundation Phase Profile which is being introduced in September 2015 will support on-entry assessment to the Foundation Phase through observation with a baseline assessment being carried out in Reception class. This will support the tracking of children's progress to the end of the Foundation Phase. The Foundation Phase Profile will be one element of a wider Early Years Development Assessment Framework (EYDAF), which is intended to provide a means of tracking children's development from 0 to 7. The EYDAF will link the Foundation Phase Profile to other assessment tools such as Schedule of Growing Skills 2 already being used for children in Flying Start.