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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# CAMAU Assessing for the Future

## Handbook



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The potential audience</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
The commission	5
A note about vocabulary	5
The components of this resource	6
<b>Progression and assessment: reciprocally linked</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Developing policy into practice</b>	<b>9</b>
Co-construction	9
Subsidiarity	9
Promoting real, meaningful change	9
The community of enquiry	10
<b>The structure of the workshop series</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Preparing to use the resource</b>	<b>13</b>
Taking the initiative	13
Professional learning and capacity building	13
Selecting participants	13
The advantage of diversity	14
A cluster approach	14
<b>Supporting a community of enquiry</b>	<b>15</b>
Institutional commitment	15
Regions, partnerships and local authorities	15
Membership	15
Dedicated time	16
Meeting face to face or online	16
Communication between workshop sessions	16
<b>Participating in the workshop series</b>	<b>17</b>
Active participation	17
Plenary, small group and individual sessions	17
Drawing on experience	17
Associated activities	18
<b>Community of enquiry: the basics</b>	<b>19</b>
Setting	19
Tone	19
Critical friendship	19
Recording	20

Review	20
Specific techniques	20
<b>The role of the workshop facilitator</b>	<b>21</b>
Facilitation, critical friendship and coaching	22
<b>Annex: Techniques to promote active participation and reflection</b>	<b>23</b>

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A team comprising members of staff of the University of Glasgow Educational Assessment Network (UGEAN) and of Yr Athrofa, University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD), was commissioned by the Welsh Government to develop this resource. The team was led by Professor Louise Hayward (from UGEAN). The other members of the team were:

- (from UGEAN) Estelia Bórquez Sánchez, Carolyn Hutchinson, George MacBride, Kara Makara Fuller, David Morrison-Love, Ernest Spencer, Francisco Valdera-Gil and Lesley Wiseman-Orr
- (from UWTSD) Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd, Anna Brychan, Elaine Sharpling and David Stacey.

Throughout the development process the team was supported, stimulated and advised by members of the Curriculum and Assessment Division of the Welsh Government. On occasion, advice was also provided by colleagues from other divisions within Welsh Government.

The team was also encouraged, supported, challenged and advised by the project's advisory group which included representatives of the regions and partnerships and of Estyn. Their advice has played a significant role in the development process.

Members of the advisory group identified schools and practitioners who were asked to take part in the development of this resource. These practitioners participated in a trial series of workshops (Welsh-medium and English-medium) through which they provided extensive advice on both the content and structure of the resource. During a period of considerable pressure as the country and education system began to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, these practitioners gave generously of their time, experience, expertise, reflective thinking and goodwill. The team wish to place on record their heartfelt thanks to these practitioners for their input to this work.

## **The potential audience**

The resource has been designed to be accessible and useful to all practitioners in schools and settings as they design their curriculum and/or plan learning experiences aligned with the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales. Schools and settings and those who support them will make their own decisions as to how best to use this resource, but its design reflects an expectation that responsibility for its use will often lie with schools/settings, clusters, networks and alliances.

## **Recommendation**

This handbook provides essential information about the use of this resource. It is strongly recommended that all who are considering using this resource, all who

facilitate workshop sessions and all who participate in these should refer to this handbook before considering the workshop descriptors in detail.

# Introduction

## The commission

This resource has been developed for use by practitioners, schools and settings to meet the following commissioning brief to:

- ‘...develop the capacity and skills of practitioners related to assessment as they engage with the [‘Curriculum for Wales guidance’](#)...
- ‘...generate deeper understanding of the assessment arrangements developed within the ‘Curriculum for Wales guidance’ and of the relationship between these and the approach to curriculum design, the principles of progression and the pedagogical principles...
- ‘...develop the capacity of practitioners to address the following questions in the context of their schools and classrooms:
  - What is the purpose of assessment within Curriculum for Wales and the school curriculum?
  - What is my understanding of progression and how could I use assessment to support learners to move forward on the continuum of learning as described in the ‘Curriculum for Wales guidance?’

Development of the resource was completed in June 2022.

Deepening understanding of progression and assessment and developing classroom assessment practice are mutually supportive processes. Learning develops through participation and activity in which knowledge and understanding can be applied, reviewed and refined. The workshops at the centre of this resource reflect this approach through providing opportunities for practitioners, as they extend and deepen their understanding of key ideas of progression and assessment, to develop their own assessment practice in ways that reflect the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales and contribute to capacity-building within their school or setting.

The question guiding the workshops is ‘How can the progression and assessment guidance contained within Curriculum for Wales guidance be reflected in the experience of learning of every child and young person in Wales?’ Consequently, this resource provides participants with support as they develop the [guidance on supporting learner progression](#) to reflect the priorities and specific requirements of their own schools and settings as they design their school curriculum and plan learning experiences for their classes.

The approach adopted is aligned with that of other resources, including [Camau i’r Dyfodol](#), which support schools and settings and practitioners in their use of that guidance.

## A note about vocabulary

Throughout this resource:

- ‘classroom’ refers to any learning and teaching space within a school or setting

- 'practitioner' refers to any member of staff with a formal responsibility for supporting learning within a school or setting
- 'school or setting' refers to any funded provision of learning for children and young people aged 3 to 16.

## **The components of this resource**

The resource comprises:

- this handbook, which provides an introduction to the resource and essential advice on its use
- a series of 6 workshops, each 2 to 2½ hours in length (including a break) with associated activities, arranged in 3 pairs:
  - workshops 1 and 2: progression and assessment
  - workshops 3 and 4: the learner at the centre
  - workshops 5 and 6: integrating curriculum, assessment and pedagogy
- materials for use or reference by participants in the course of the workshops and during associated activities.

All these materials are available online.



## Progression and assessment: reciprocally linked

The [introduction to Curriculum for Wales](#) provides a clear statement of the overarching purpose of assessment as supporting every learner to make progress and move forward in their learning.

‘Assessment is intrinsic to curriculum design. Its overarching purpose is to support every learner to make progress. Assessment should always focus on moving learning forward by understanding the learning which has already taken place and using this to ensure that each learner is challenged and supported appropriately, according to their individual learning needs.

‘It requires partnerships among all those involved, including the learner. It should recognise the individual learning needs and backgrounds of each learner and encourage a holistic view of each learner’s development. Accordingly, both practitioner and learner should develop an understanding of how the learner learns and their attitude and approach to learning, in order to support them to continue to progress and to foster commitment to their learning.’

The detailed [advice on supporting learner progression](#) reiterates the link between progression as central to the curriculum, and assessment as fundamental to planning and ensuring progression.

‘Learner progression along a continuum of learning from ages 3 to 16 is central to Curriculum for Wales. Assessment plays a fundamental role in enabling each individual learner to make progress at an appropriate pace, ensuring they are supported and challenged accordingly.’

In making this link central to curriculum design and the planning of learning experiences, Curriculum for Wales changes the concept of assessment from one which often faces backward to the past, focused on recording evidence of learning to date, to one which faces forward to the future, focused on using evidence of learning to enable each learner to make further progress. In Curriculum for Wales, the processes of assessment:

- focus less on judging evidence of past learning against external standards, recording the results and using these for a range of purposes that do not primarily include informing future learning and teaching (backward-facing)
- focus more on gathering evidence of current learning, understanding the progression made by the learner, clarifying how this progression has been made, reflecting on this and using this to inform further progression in learning (forward-facing).

Assessment that is backward-facing and focused on judging past learning has often taken the form of discrete assessment events (such as examinations, tests, interviews, performances, essays, oral presentations or judgement of artefacts). These may be perceived on occasion as activities distinct from the processes of learning and teaching in the classroom.

In contrast, assessment that is forward-facing and focused on understanding and supporting progression in learning is better thought of as ongoing activity, built into learning experiences in the classroom and into the planning of these. Information from assessing will primarily be generated during classroom experiences and activities, including information used at those times when it is helpful to stand back and take a longer view of a learner's progression.

This approach helps learners as well as practitioners to understand not only what progress has been made but also how it has been made. As learners develop their understanding of the processes as well as the outcomes of their learning, they become active participants in reflecting upon and planning how they can move forward on their learning journey.

This move towards forward-facing assessing in Curriculum for Wales also involves a widening of the focus of assessment in several ways.

- The curriculum as outlined in the statements of what matters and descriptions of learning includes much that is familiar. It also introduces skills and attributes which have not previously been regularly assessed, some of which may be difficult or sensitive to assess.
- To assess progression in these skills and attributes and, more generally, to promote equity, assessment practice will draw on a wider range of evidence of learning which may be derived from learners' participation in a wide range of activities in a range of contexts within and beyond the school or setting.
- Assessment practice will be developed to provide more information on the processes of learning, as well as on the outcomes, in order to support learners to become more effective.
- Progression in learning is furthered when learners have opportunities to participate, with support as required, in the processes both of gathering and reflecting on evidence of their progression and of making use of this evidence to plan progression in learning.

This resource brings together policy intentions and aspirations, research findings and the experience and expertise of practitioners to identify practical ways to help learners, practitioners and schools/settings to put these ideas into practice in ways that are manageable and sustainable.

## **Developing policy into practice**

This section outlines some of the key design principles that underpin this resource.

### **Co-construction**

The model of policy development and implementation of Curriculum for Wales has at all stages been that of co-construction. This recognises that meaningful and sustainable educational change draws on the experience and expertise of practitioners who are active partners in realising policy aspirations as they design their curriculum and plan lessons. This resource has been designed to support practitioners as active partners in this process as they realise the ambitions of the Curriculum for Wales framework.

Every practitioner in schools and other educational settings in Wales employs a range of assessment strategies in their classroom and has developed expertise in doing so. In these workshops, practitioners will share, reflect critically and build on their experience and expertise as the basis for development of practice in assessing to meet the intentions of Curriculum for Wales. As they do so they will be supported to consider the relationship between experience, policy aspirations and relevant research findings.

### **Subsidiarity**

The Welsh education system is committed to developing policy and practice in the recognition of the importance of the local context to curriculum design and lesson planning. The metaphor which sums up Curriculum for Wales is that of the learning journey through the curriculum. The route map of the journey provided by the national guidance allows for different pathways to be planned for learners within this route map; there may be diversions, times when learners retrace their steps, times when they follow a different path from some of their peers, and times when they move forward at different paces. This:

- allows the needs (including for any appropriate support or challenge) and interests of the individual learner to be addressed
- makes effective use of the resources of the environment of the school/setting
- reflects the local context (for example geographic, social, economic, linguistic)
- makes effective use of the specific strengths, skills and interests of each practitioner.

This approach is embedded within this resource.

### **Promoting real, meaningful change**

It is important to develop understanding of how approaches to assessing aligned with the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales differs from assessment policy and practice with which practitioners may be familiar. The move from assessment that is primarily backward-facing to assessment that is primarily forward-facing implies that planning assessment must be closely integrated into curriculum design and lesson

planning. The selection of content, pedagogical approaches adopted and modes of assessing must be mutually aligned to promote progression in learning.

The necessary shift in understanding and approach to planning means that current practice cannot be assimilated – passively and uncritically carried over into planning learning within Curriculum for Wales. Meaningful learning involves actively constructing knowledge and skills through interaction with the environment and reorganising one’s mental structures to make sense of the world. Developing understanding of the purposes of assessment and changing practice are mutually supportive processes. The processes of developing and changing practice will feed back into further reflection and deeper understanding. This does not imply that all current practice will simply need to be abandoned, rather that current practice will be critically examined to understand how it can be built on, developed and refined to meet the new purpose of assessment.

## **The community of enquiry**

Participants in these workshops will be members of a community of enquiry. Research suggests that an effective learning environment is one where articulation, interaction and cooperation are encouraged. Communities of enquiry provide colleagues a structure, space and support to engage in focused, purposeful discussion and reflection to move their understanding, thinking and practice forward. These workshops provide suitable conditions for practitioners to think about how to turn the [guidance on progression and assessment](#) into reality in their own context and about how to continue that work in the future. They offer opportunities to identify factors that will support this process, possible barriers and means of addressing these. Participating in these workshops offers participants an opportunity to develop significant skills to support communities of enquiry in their own context and to coach colleagues.

In a community of enquiry participants support one another and enjoy opportunities to share and reflect on existing and developing practice. Within this community of enquiry all participants have their professionalism respected and validated. At the same time, they are challenged and supported to reflect together critically on their practice and on the means by which it can be developed to promote further progression in learning. Participants are from the beginning encouraged to identify both those areas where they have made progress and are willing to share ideas with others and those areas that they find challenging and are willing to consider means of addressing.

Many communities of enquiry bring together policymakers, researchers and practitioners who share a common goal. In most cases it is likely that the communities of enquiry who use this series of workshops will comprise practitioners alone. However, policy and research findings are not neglected. Participants will be supported to consider critically policy intentions and research findings in the context of their own practice.

More information on this approach can be found at [The Community of Inquiry](#).

## The structure of the workshop series

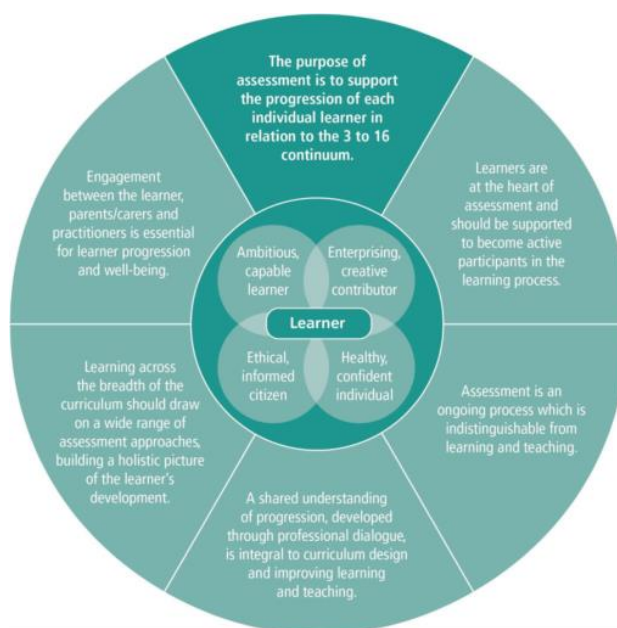
The series of 6 workshops is designed as an integrated resource to enhance understanding of assessment and progression within Curriculum for Wales and to build capacity in schools and settings to use this understanding for curriculum design and lesson planning.

As outlined previously, the workshops are organised as 3 pairs, each pair addressing a particular theme:

- progression and assessment (workshops 1 and 2)
- the learner at the centre (workshops 3 and 4)
- integrating curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (workshops 5 and 6).

Each workshop is planned to run for 2 to 2½ hours (including a break) and includes opportunities for whole group, small group and individual activities.

While all of the principles that underpin assessment within Curriculum for Wales are relevant to all of these themes, each pair of workshops focuses on those principles that seem most relevant and each of the principles is considered in at least one pair of workshops.



Participating in this series of workshops is supported by associated activities.

- All workshops are designed to be carried out in 2 to 2½ hours.
- Workshop 1 is preceded by a preparatory activity.
- Participants are asked to complete limited reading (not exceeding an hour) before each of workshops 2 through 6.
- Participants are asked to plan and carry out a small-scale practical enquiry after each of workshops 1 through 5 and report on this at the start of the next workshop. This needs to be manageable, realistic and practical. (See '[Associated activities](#)' on page 18).

- Participants are asked to consider developing an activity at the end of workshop 6 to take forward practice in their context and to work with a critical friend from within the group as they do so.

The activities between the workshops are designed to act as a bridge from one into the next.

Each workshop descriptor comprises 3 sections:

- introduction – this includes a reminder of the overall structure of the series, a note of the principles of assessment most relevant to this workshop and brief references to relevant policy contexts
- preparatory reading and reflection to be carried out before the workshop
- the workshop programme – an outline of each activity (whole group, small group, individual).

## Preparing to use the resource

This section raises points for consideration by those preparing to use the resource.

### Taking the initiative

Building on the development process that led to its creation, the resource has been designed to be used by groups of practitioners in schools and settings across Wales operating as Welsh-medium and English-medium [communities of enquiry](#).

The authors recognise that an initiative to use this resource may come from different stakeholders in Welsh education, including for example:

- an individual school/setting
- a school cluster group (such as a secondary school and feeder primary schools)
- a group of secondary schools (such as those working together across the latter stages of the 3 to 16 continuum)
- a special schools network
- local school/setting alliances and networks
- regions and partnerships.

This initiative may be linked to school improvement planning and priorities, to ongoing professional dialogue to develop shared understanding of progression or to regional and partnership professional learning programmes.

### Professional learning and capacity building

This resource is intended to inform both professional learning and capacity-building within the school or setting. Participants are supported to develop their understanding of progression and of the relationship between assessment and progression in order to develop their assessment practice. Those who participate will also contribute to building capacity within a school, setting or cluster as they share their developing understanding and skills with their colleagues. They can do so by involving colleagues in planned activities between workshops and in a final planned activity. They can also do so within the context of:

- school improvement planning
- the development of transition or reporting arrangements
- developing shared understanding of progression.

As they do so they can make use of their experience of working in a community of enquiry and of the skills that they have developed while doing so.

### Selecting participants

All practitioners, regardless of the length of their experience and of their seniority, can contribute with authority to a community of enquiry. The authors recognise that the final determination of practitioners to participate will be contingent on:

- the initial intention to use the resource

- the priorities of participating schools and settings
- approaches to capacity-building and professional learning within the school or setting
- the development of the [school as a learning organisation](#).

Thus, participants may be, for example:

- members of the senior leadership team
- members of staff with a leadership role in professional learning
- members of staff with a leadership role in assessment
- practitioners with a role in coaching or mentoring
- a representative group of staff (for example, across stages taught or across the curriculum).

In all cases, participants can be expected to use their experience in the workshops to contribute appropriately to capacity-building related to assessment in their school or setting.

## **The advantage of diversity**

The value of participation may be diminished if all those taking part have similar roles in the same or very similar contexts. It is therefore valuable for participants within a group to come from different contexts: these may be different areas of Wales different sectors (such as primary or secondary), schools serving communities of different profiles, or different areas of learning and experience. This provides an opportunity for discussion that is richer, more critical and thus more valuable than if it were limited to members of a homogenous group. It encourages participants to articulate and explain their thinking to colleagues who may not share the same background as themselves and opens ideas up for questioning and debate.

It is also a means of encouraging participants to move out of their immediate 'comfort bubble' and inhibits opportunities for 'group think'. When participants are obliged to articulate their views for colleagues who may not share the same experiences or assumptions, the process encourages them to reflect on their views and on the value of evidence which otherwise they may uncritically take for granted. The section on [critical friendship](#) provides further related advice.

## **A cluster approach**

The authors believe that a school cluster (as defined in the [Direction relating to developing and maintaining a shared understanding of progression](#)) could use this resource effectively. A cluster approach brings together colleagues who share a common interest or purpose and who work in different contexts. Unity of purpose can then be informed by diversity of experience and context.

The authors recognise that there are other ways of bringing together unity of purpose and diversity of experience and context, including for example:

- a rural schools network
- a group of schools with a common interest



- a group of schools facing a common challenge
- an interest group of practitioners
- a regional schools alliance
- a regional network.

The authors recognise that regions and partnerships may wish to take a lead in organising and supporting local school groups to use this resource. Other communities of interest may be set up and supported within the framework of the National Network as this develops.

Schools and settings and those who support them will make their own decisions as to how best to [manage and support](#) and [facilitate](#) use of this resource but its design reflects the understanding that responsibility for its use and for facilitation will often lie with schools and clusters that have taken the initiative themselves.

## **Supporting a community of enquiry**

Participants in these workshops are contributing to the development of assessment practice that will benefit all young people in Wales, both through their own professional learning and through their contribution to capacity-building in their school or setting. There are a number of means by which they can be supported as they do so.

### **Institutional commitment**

Schools and clusters will make use of the resource according to their own priorities. It is important that senior leaders discuss with their staff how this resource can best contribute to the school or cluster improvement planning and to the development of the [school as a learning organisation](#).

Within that, while the authors recognise the importance of subsidiarity, of decisions being taken as close to the point of action as feasible, they believe that these workshops will be most effective when there is a commitment to use them as an integrated series. The activities between the workshops are designed to act as a bridge from one to the next and participants will be asked at the start of each to reflect on the activity that they planned at the end of the preceding workshop and carried out in the interim.

### **Regions, partnerships and local authorities**

Regions, partnerships and local authorities may wish to take responsibility for managing and supporting the use of this resource and for identifying particular groups of participants.

### **Membership**

A workshop group will be most effective if it includes between 8 and 12 participants. If there are more than this number it will be very difficult to have whole group discussions to which all can contribute meaningfully. If there are fewer, the range of

experience may be too narrow to support critical discussion. Small group activities should be organised so that the number in each does not exceed 4 participants.

Maintaining a stable membership through the workshop series will help to build the trusting relationships that underpin such a community of enquiry, allowing exploration and understanding to deepen from workshop to workshop.

The benefits of [ensuring that there is a diversity of experience among the members](#) has already been noted.

## **Dedicated time**

Effective use of this resource requires sufficient dedicated time for each participant to take part in each of the workshops, to read and reflect as required for preparation and to carry out their bridging activities. The structure and timing [have been outlined previously](#). The time allocated for these purposes should be protected and not regarded as an additional bank of time available for other purposes.

Experience suggests that it is best to space workshops at least 2 and preferably 3 weeks apart. This allows sufficient time for the bridging activities, whether these take the form of trialling approaches in participants' classrooms or discussion and feedback with colleagues.

## **Meeting face to face or online**

Experience suggests that establishing and maintaining a community of enquiry is generally easier when participants meet face to face. It is therefore recommended that, if possible, participants in these workshops meet face to face. The workshops should take place in a comfortable, welcoming and distraction-free setting with adequate space for breakout groups. Equipment (flip charts, tables to write at, projectors) should be readily available.

It may be necessary for practical reasons to use this material in an online environment such as Teams. In that case it is important that all participants have full access to necessary functions (including breakout rooms, screen sharing, chat function) and that facilitators can readily make use of these and support others to do so.

## **Communication between workshop sessions**

Whether the workshops take place face to face or online, it is important that each community of enquiry has access to a facility for interactive communication with the other members between sessions: to share thinking, questions and suggestions for resources. This may take the form of an app or program designed primarily for educational or business purposes, or for more general communication (such as a shared email box or a WhatsApp group).

## **Participating in the workshop series**

### **Active participation**

Rather than being recipients of ready-made solutions, participants in these workshops actively contribute their own expertise and should be provided with opportunities to reflect upon their experience and practice. They are expected to make full use of those opportunities and, through this active participation, both support and learn from one another.

Co-construction, working together to elaborate policy into practice in each school or setting, involves bringing together policy, research and practice. Relevant policy contexts and research contexts are identified for each workshop. Practitioners taking part in these workshops are asked to bring to them their own experience, including examples of their own assessment practices, and their reflections on this.

### **Plenary, small group and individual sessions**

These workshops are designed so that participants have a range of types of activity to reflect on critically and on which to share their experience, expertise and reflection with colleagues. Use of a range of types of activity is helpful in ensuring that participants do not settle too easily into routines but are stimulated and supported to move outside of their 'comfort bubble'. The presence of colleagues from different backgrounds is an important aspect of this and, wherever possible, both plenary and breakout groups should not comprise only colleagues who share very similar backgrounds.

### **Drawing on experience**

To make sure that each workshop is firmly embedded in the realities of participants' schools/settings and classrooms, each workshop includes preparatory and follow-up activities. At each workshop participants should come ready to share their experiences of assessment practice and be ready to discuss:

- how their practice is currently meeting the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales
- how their practice can be built upon or adapted to meet those aspirations
- factors that have supported or are likely to support culture change in their context, from backward-facing to forward-facing assessment
- barriers to change encountered or anticipated and how to overcome them.

When reflecting on their own and others' practice, participants may find the following 5 questions helpful, which can be readily adapted to be appropriate to many assessment contexts.

- What are we assessing? (Knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes, the processes of learning?)
- When do we assess? (In the course of day-to-day learning and teaching, at the end of a unit of work, in class, in other school/setting contexts, in activities beyond the school/setting?)

- How do we assess? (Observing learning in class, dialogue with learner about course work, artefacts, performances, questionnaires, standing back and reflecting with learners, learner self-assessment, peer assessment, using a learning log or portfolio?)
- Who takes part in assessing? (Learners, practitioners, others in the school/setting, others beyond the school or setting?)
- What do we do with assessment evidence? (Inform dialogue with learner on improving current learning, stand back and review and plan progression over a longer term, support transitions, support dialogue with parents and carers, review and reflect on professional practice?)

## **Associated activities**

Participating in this series of workshops should include participating in associated activities.

- The first workshop is preceded by a preparatory activity.
- Participants are asked to carry out limited reading before each of workshops 2 through 6.
- Participants are asked to plan and carry out a small-scale practical enquiry after each of workshops 1 through 5 and reflect on this at the start of the next workshop.
- Participants are asked to consider developing an activity at the end of workshop 6 to take forward practice in their context and to work with a critical friend from within the group as they do so.

Planning the small-scale practical enquiries will be informed by workshop discussions, readings and professional practice. This may be an activity carried out in the course of learning activities in your own classroom or may involve a discussion with a small group of learners, or may involve colleagues in discussion and planning. It needs to be manageable and genuinely helpful in moving assessment practice forward. These activities between workshops should include some reflection on their outcomes to adjust future practice and to support further building on success.

Participants will be encouraged to ensure that their activity:

- is clearly related to the theme of the workshop
- is manageable, realistic and practical
- responds to the activities and discussions that have taken place in this workshop
- is developmental, moving your assessment practice forward.

They will be encouraged to reflect on:

- the ways in which it was successful
- the steps they took to overcome any challenges
- changes they might make in the light of experience and reading.

## **Community of enquiry: the basics**

The effectiveness of a community of enquiry is ultimately the responsibility of the whole group but it is often helpful to have a volunteer agree to undertake the role of facilitator (which can rotate among participants).

Co-construction may be familiar to some participants but a relatively new concept and practice for others. One aspect of the co-construction model is increasing the capacity of all to contribute to communities of enquiry in which all participants are learners. Everyone's contributions are valued in such discussion. Discussion during co-construction must therefore be structured to ensure that all feel comfortable and encouraged to contribute in this way, whatever their length of experience or their place in the management structure of the school or education service.

The responsibility for organising and managing participation in any particular series of workshops may be shared by participants. Other groups may be set up and managed by a region or partnership. In either case, simply bringing a range of professionals together in one space is not enough to ensure co-construction and the establishment of a community of enquiry. All participants should experience and perceive the workshops as safe spaces for thinking, talking and trying – for making valuable mistakes in a safe environment.

The practices that follow are widely used to encourage the establishment of such groups. While these were developed for face-to-face sessions, most can be adapted for use in online meetings.

### **Setting**

The setting needs to be comfortable, welcoming and distraction free with adequate space, including for breakout groups. Seating should not reflect employment hierarchies. Equipment (computers, flip charts, tables to write at, projectors) should be readily available. Group members should take steps not to be interrupted by external requests, phone calls or messages, or excessive external noise and bustle.

### **Tone**

Participants will be aware of the importance of using inclusive language and respectful and supportive modes of questioning and responding. In a professional discussion such as this, participants should support any claims they make by referring clearly to evidence, which may include their own experience, the experience of others, or research findings. Contributors can be encouraged to acknowledge and build on one another's points, rather than simply rejecting or countering these.

### **Critical friendship**

The attitude of participants in the community of enquiry should be that of a critical friend, one who supports others' thinking and reflection and, in so doing, identifies challenges. An effective critical friend is one who strikes a healthy balance. If the debate focuses only on support, especially unqualified general praise, then new thinking is not explored, but if the conversation offers too much challenge, especially

if this is done in negative terms, colleagues may be overwhelmed and demotivated. Critical friendship requires continuing developing two-directional dialogue rather than detached specific statements that do not encourage a response. A good critical friend adopts many of the approaches that are noted in the section '[The role of the workshop facilitator](#)' as typical of the effective group facilitator.

Participants in these workshops will be encouraged to act as critical friends to one another. They may also draw on critical friends within their own school or setting or within networks in which they participate.

Further information on this practice is available from the [Glossary of Education Reform](#).

## **Recording**

Keeping a record of key points made in discussion, interesting information and stimulating exemplars produces a reference resource for participants as they move forward in their thinking. This record should preferably be kept visible to participants during the discussion and should be accessible after the event through the [platform or app](#) that the group are using to share information. As with facilitation, a member of the group should agree to take on this role, which could rotate among participants. Using a flip chart can help maintain focus in a group; it can also be used to bring different ideas together, for example by asking each individual in the group to summarise their own thoughts on sticky notes, then placing these on the chart. A PowerPoint template can be similarly used. Photographs of flip charts and/or other notes can be used for recording purposes. To help in this process, templates have been provided for a number of the workshop activities.

## **Review**

Getting group members to review how they have operated is valuable. This need only take a few minutes at the end of a session, starting with 3 basic questions: What did we do that worked well? Did anything not work so well? Should we do anything differently next time?

## **Specific techniques**

[The 'Annex'](#) provides detail on techniques that can be used to stimulate and support discussion and reflection in whole group and small group activities within a community of enquiry.

## The role of the workshop facilitator

All workshop participants share a responsibility to make success possible but having someone in the role of facilitator should make this easier. The facilitator's responsibility is to ensure that all participants are comfortable, to keep everyone focused on purpose, to maintain the flow of discussion and to encourage interaction and critical engagement by all. It is also their responsibility to keep an eye on the clock and make sure that good use is made of the time available for all of the workshop activities. It is not the facilitator's role to lead or dominate discussion.

This will usually require agreement to have one of the group members, unless the group is very small, acting as facilitator. The role of facilitator can rotate among members of the group and should not be restricted to those whose day-to-day roles are leadership positions.

An early opportunity should be provided to discuss and agree facilitation and the group's ground rules. If possible, this can be done prior to the first workshop. 'Icebreaker' activities can be useful the first time a group gets together, as is allowing a little 'warm-up' time at the start of each meeting. During discussions, simply acknowledging contributions can help to ensure that these continue to flow.

Where possible, facilitators should encourage participants to refer to real examples of their practice when considering their responses to discussion questions. Questions can be used by all group members to drive the conversation: 'Why that particular assessment approach?', 'What does it contribute to learner progression?', 'How does it get us closer to realising the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales?'

Facilitation involves focusing on 'appreciative' discussion where possible – on the things that have gone well, why they have gone well, what we can learn from them and how we can build on them. Problems can be discussed but the group should not focus solely on concerns and worries.

There are established methods to promote and sustain discussion, encourage participation and lead participants to further reflection in breakout rooms.

- Asking for more detail ('When did that happen?', 'Who else was involved?')
- Using an elaboration probe ('Could you tell me more about that?', 'Can you give some examples of that in practice?')
- Using a clarification probe ('You've used the word 'challenge', what does this mean in this context?')
- Reflecting back ('I see, so the first step was to look at each of the what matters statements. What was next?')

The facilitator, supported by the whole group, should try to ensure that discussions embody and promote the ways of working developed as part of the curriculum reform process:

- development through co-construction: sharing questions and problems and jointly developing solutions; working across traditional boundaries (policy, practice, research); examining approaches from different perspectives

- equity in co-construction: equity between different voices rather than one voice giving direction; allowing everyone to challenge and be challenged, to support and be supported
- space and time to think and engage: building understanding, professional dialogue, trust and respect over time rather than rushing to deliver a product; thinking aloud and reviewing; allowing mistakes in a safe environment
- clear understanding of why things are learned and done: consistently asking (and challenging) why certain activities are carried out or required; asking whether they contribute to learners realising the aspirations of Curriculum for Wales
- critical engagement with expertise: engagement with a range of quality research, expert input and international expertise
- leadership at all levels: all parts of the system must provide leadership within a culture of trust and empowerment
- accepting that there may be different solutions identified: these will reflect shared principles which are realised in context-appropriate ways.

### **Facilitation, critical friendship and coaching**

There are clear parallels between the skills of effective facilitation and of critical friendship and those required by a model of coaching such as GROW in which the steps are as follows.

1. Goal: identify the goal that is desired.
2. Reality: what is the current state of affairs? How far away is the goal? This step is truly a reality check.
3. Obstacles and options: what is standing in the way of goal achievement and what options are available to remove barriers?
4. Ways forward: action steps must be created to help a client reach a goal. The 'W' can also refer to the will to work to achieve a goal.

It is intended that those who participate in and share in facilitating these workshops will bring these skills back into their setting and support colleagues in developing both their understanding of progression and their skills in assessing progression.



## **Annex: Techniques to promote active participation and reflection**

Some of the techniques noted below are suggested for use at appropriate points in the workshop descriptors. Further use may be made of them if a group, or those facilitating it, consider it would be helpful or effective to do so.

Many of these activities have been adapted from activities for school, college and university students in the [‘Project Zero Thinking Routines Toolbox’](#) developed by Harvard University Graduate School of Education. The close relationship between thinking and discussion allows these activities to be used as a means of supporting discussion and encouraging participants to articulate, share, explain, justify and critique their thinking.

### **The 4 C’s: A routine for structuring a discussion of a text or exemplars of practice.**

After reading an article or text or participating in a discussion, participants are asked to make notes under each of these headings. They can then use these notes for their own planning or future reference, or to support a discussion with a colleague. The wording of the questions can be adapted to suit the detail of the activity.

- **Concepts:** what key concepts or ideas do you think are important and worth holding on to from the text or exemplar?
- **Connections:** what connections do you draw between the text or exemplar and your own thinking or practice?
- **Challenge:** what ideas, positions or assumptions are made in the text or the exemplar that you would want to challenge or argue?
- **Changes:** what changes in attitudes, thinking or action are suggested by the text or exemplar for you or for colleagues in your own context, or for others in the education system?

### **Compass points: relating an idea or proposal to one’s own context**

After reading a text, watching a video or participating in a discussion, each participant individually completes the compass rose as follows.

**E = Excited:** what excites you about this idea or propositions? What’s the upside?

**W = Worrisome:** what do you find worrisome about this idea or proposition? What’s the downside?

**N = Need to know:** what else do you need to know or find out about this idea or proposition? What additional information would help you to evaluate things?

**S = Stance or suggestion for moving forward:** what is your current stance or opinion on the idea or proposition? How might you move forward in your evaluation of this idea or proposition?

Participants can then use these to share their thinking through discussion with colleagues.

**Connect, extend, challenge: engaging with new ideas, relating these to one's own practice or prior knowledge and reflecting on how they have extended their thinking as a result**

Participants consider what they have just read, heard or seen and then answer the following questions.

- How are the ideas and information connected to what you already knew?
- What new ideas did you get that broadened your thinking or extended it in different directions?
- What challenges or puzzles emerge for you?

**Does it fit? A routine for thinking creatively about options**

- Fit your options to the ideal: identify what the ideal situation would look like and then evaluate each option against it.
- Ask yourself: how well does each option fit with the ideal situation?
- Fit your options to the criteria: identify the criteria or attributes that feel important for you to consider in this situation and then evaluate each option against those.
- Ask yourself: how well does each option fit the criteria?
- Fit your options to the situation: identify the realities and constraints of your situation, such as resources and time, and then evaluate each option against them.
- Ask yourself: how well does each option fit the realities of the situation?
- Fit your options to you personally: try out each option by running a 'mental movie' in which you imagine yourself carrying out the option and try to get a sense of what it would feel like.
- Ask yourself: which option feels like the best fit for me?

**Generate-sort-connect-elaborate: a routine for organising one's understanding of a topic through concept mapping**

Participants use the steps below to map their understanding of a topic, concept, initiative or issue that is important to them.

- Generate a list of ideas and initial thoughts that come to mind when you think about this particular topic/issue.
- Sort your ideas according to how central or tangential they are. Place central ideas near the centre and more tangential ideas toward the outside of the page.
- Connect your ideas by drawing connecting lines between ideas that have something in common. Explain and write in a short sentence how the ideas are connected.
- Elaborate on any of the ideas/thoughts you have written so far by adding new ideas that expand, extend, or add to your initial ideas.

Participants can continue generating, connecting and elaborating new ideas until they feel that they have a good representation of their understanding. This can then be shared in discussion with colleagues undertaking the same activity.

**‘I used to think... Now I think...’: a routine for reflecting on how and why our thinking has changed**

Participants can take the following steps to help clarify and articulate how and why their thinking about an issue has developed.

- I used to think: write down a sentence summarising what you used to think about the matter under discussion.
- Now I think: write down a sentence summarising what you now think about the matter under discussion.
- I have developed my thinking because: write down a sentence summarising what has led you to develop your thinking.

**Meta-planning**

Meta-planning encourages participants to express their thoughts on the issue under discussion. It involves writing key words on sticky notes and then collectively placing and arranging these into sub-groups on a flip chart or wall space. When all the notes are on the board, the facilitator can guide the group in collating similar ideas together and add a sub-heading for each group. This approach helps to incorporate everyone’s ideas and contributions quickly.

**PMI grid (plus, minus and interesting)**

This encourages individuals to consider after a presentation or a reading which ideas seem to them to be valuable or useful in their context (plus), which seem to come with disadvantages if applied in their own context (minus) and those that seem interesting regardless of their immediate value.

PLUS	MINUS
INTERESTING	

The results can then be discussed with colleagues in the group or used to inform the individual’s own later planning.

**Sticking points: a routine for mapping messy controversies**

Participants select a big issue and consider as many of these 4 facets as are relevant.

- Policies: what understanding of policy do participants share? What understanding of policies do they differ on?
- Facts: what facts do participants agree on? What facts do they differ on?
- Values: what values do participants agree on? What values do they differ on?

- Assumptions: what assumptions do participants share? What assumptions do they differ on?

### **Take note: a routine for distilling ideas and identifying emerging questions**

After reading a text, viewing a video or taking part in a discussion, individual participants take notes under each of the following headings.

- What is the most important point?
- What are you finding challenging, puzzling or difficult to understand?
- What question would you most like to discuss?
- What is something you found interesting?

This routine can be used to enhance participants' engagement with ideas by focusing on capturing the heart and distilling key issues and questions after an episode rather than in the midst of it. This allows them to participate fully knowing that there is time to consolidate their learning afterwards.

### **Triangle square circle**

This can be carried out by individuals or pairs or small groups. As participants consider an issue, they are asked to draw a triangle and next to it write down 3 important points that arise from their consideration of the issue. Then participants draw a square and next to it write down anything that 'squares' with their thinking or that they agree with. Finally, the participants draw a circle and next to it write down anything that is still 'circling' in their head or questions that they have. Findings can then be discussed. It is possible to prepare sheets with a pre-printed triangle, square and circle.

### **Trios**

This is designed to provide a structure that requires the active participation of all. Groups are formed of 3 individuals. Each member acts in turn as:

- questioner
- responder
- reporter.

The questioner encourages the responder to provide the account requested and answer the questions posed; the questioner can prompt for further detail as required. The reporter notes key points and keeps time (timing agreed at the start of the process). It is usually helpful to have some form of template to record these points. Each person has the opportunity to undertake each role.