**ANNEX A**

**INDEX OF ENCLOSURES**

| No. | Description | Date | Explanation of redactions | Clause |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ***Agenda Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 | Personal information | S38(1)(b) |
| 2 | ***Minute of September meeting, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | Available Online/Already Published | s25(1) |
| 3 | ***Role of knowledge in the curriculum areas, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | | |
| 4 | ***PowerPoint for Role of knowledge in the curriculum areas, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 30 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | | |
| 5 | ***Local Attainment Stretch Aims, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | | |
| 6 | ***PowerPoint presentation for Local Attainment Stretch Aims, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 30 January 2024 | | |
| 7 | ***ACEL data and PISA results overview, Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2022-23 - gov.scot, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | Available Online/Already Published | s25(1) |
| 8 | ***ACEL data and PISA results overview: Programme for International Student*** | 24 January 2024 (for | Available Online/Already Published | s25(1) |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Assessment (PISA 2022): Scotland's results – highlights – gov.scot, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | meeting on 30th January 2024) | | |
| 9 | ***PowerPoint Slides for ACEL data and PISA results overview, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 24 January 2024 (for meeting on 30th January 2024) | Personal information | S38(1)(b) |
| 10 | ***Response to the position of knowledge paper, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting*** | 30 January 2024 | | |
| 11 | ***Draft minute of January 30th 2024 meeting of the Curriculum Assessment Board,*** | 30 January 2024 | Intend to publish the document within 12 weeks of the request | S27(1) |

***Enclosure 1.0 – Agenda Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

| **Curriculum and Assessment Board Meeting 25<br>30th January 2024, 11am – 12.30pm<br>Agenda** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item no.** | **Title** | **Description** | **Lead** | **Papers / Info** |
| 25-01 | **Welcome and draft minutes from last meeting, 13th Sept 2023** | Seek agreement from attendees that minutes are an accurate record | Co-Chair | Draft Minute CAB 130923 |
| 25-02 | **Education Reform** | Update on progress | Lisa Bird / [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Verbal update – no advance paper |
| 25-03 | **OECD implementation plan update** | Recommendations 1.1-1.4 - Update on progress. | Ollie Bray | Verbal update – no advance paper |
| 25-04 | **Role of knowledge in the curriculum areas** | Linked to the above item, a deeper dive into the role of knowledge in the curriculum areas. | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<br>[Redacted s38(1)(b)] | The position of Knowledge and Curriculum Review |
| 25-05 | **Local Attainment Stretch Aims** | Update and forward look. | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<br>/ [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Scottish Attainment Challenge |
| 25-06 | **ACEL data and PISA results overview** | Overview and reflections on results. | [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<br>/ [Redacted s38(1)(b)] | Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2022-23 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)<br>Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022): Scotland's results - highlights - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) |
| 25-07 | **CAB Forward Look Agenda for 2024** | Input from all stakeholders invited to inform the Board's workplan. | Secretariat | Verbal update – no advance paper |

***Enclosure 2 – Minute of September meeting, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

[Redacted s25(1)] - Information otherwise accessible

Curriculum and Assessment Board minutes: September 2023 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

***Enclosure 3 – Role of knowledge in the curriculum areas, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

## CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENT CYCLE 2024: THE POSITION OF KNOWLEDGE AND PILOT CURRICULUM REVIEWS

*A paper focusing on initial findings from Education Scotland's pilot curriculum reviews, with a view to informing the new Curriculum Improvement Cycle announced in December 2023.*

### Purpose

1. In response to Recommendation 3.4 of the 2021 OECD review of Scottish Education, Scottish Government (SG) Education Reform Directorate has worked alongside Education Scotland (ES) to explore with teachers and other stakeholders what a regular cycle of curriculum improvement might look like. This process contributed to the proposals for a systematic cycle initially discussed at CAB in March 2023.

2. In parallel to the above activity ES has been undertaking a package of pilot curriculum reviews as outlined in the OECD action plan that was endorsed by CAB in May 2022. The 'pilot' nature of these reviews was central to their design and has been emphasised at CAB throughout 2023. Differing approaches were taken for recruitment and selection of participants as well as the processes, tools and methodologies used. The pilots were exploring processes and outputs and identified significant learning as a result. Throughout the process it has been made clear to participants that these pilots were not the reviews themselves and the purpose was to evaluate and review approaches including the impact different approaches have on outcomes as well as analysing outcomes themselves.

3. In her Statement to Parliament on 12 December, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced that a new systematic curriculum improvement cycle will commence in 2024. The improvement cycle will begin with maths, with the next priority being English/literacy and - over time - will systematically cover the entire curriculum framework .

4. The pilot reviews have identified a number of themes. We would therefore like to seek CAB members':

- reflections on the pilot review findings, and
- steer on the key principles and priorities that should underpin the next phase of work as we move from the pilot activity into a full-scale systematic review and update to the curriculum.

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1 Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD

Key findings from the pilot review process

5. Pilot reviews have so far been held in the following curriculum areas; Maths, Health & Wellbeing, Social Studies and Modern Languages. Reviews are also being initiated in Expressive Arts and English/Literacy in early 2024.

6. The pilot exploratory work focused specifically on reviewing and clarifying the position of knowledge within curriculum areas (OECD recommendation 1.2), but the pilot reviews have also aligned very closely with the work on developing a systematic cycle of curriculum review (OECD recommendation 3.4). In particular they have provided the opportunity to explore the technical framework within CfE as well as an opportunity to test the method and approach to curriculum review itself.

7. Further work has also been initiated by ES which focuses on cross curricular themes. There has been engagement with stakeholders on Political Literacy and further work is planned for Financial Literacy and Learning for Sustainability.

8. These reviews have been led by Senior Education Officers with responsibility for the relevant curriculum areas. Initial learning from the pilots and the evaluations was shared with colleagues from the SG Education Reform directorate, including those with responsibility for developing proposals for a systematic cycle of curriculum review.

9. Key emerging conclusions from the pilot reviews are the following (Annex A provides more detail on these discussions and Annex B provides a summary of the key messages):

- There is evidence that we need to clarify the way that knowledge is covered in the curriculum framework;
- Practitioners have identified challenges with elements of the Experiences and Outcomes (E&Os), in terms of the content and its suitability as the technical framework which supports the four capacities of CfE;
- Curriculum review offers an opportunity to address existing structural challenges within CfE;
- Curriculum review offers an opportunity to develop clearer, more simplified guidance for practitioners (“instead of” rather than “in addition to”). However participants found it more challenging to identify aspects of the curriculum that should be deprioritised.

**Next Steps**

10. ES will continue with the Pilot Curriculum Reviews in 2024 and initiate pilots in other disciplinary and cross curricular areas. As stated in the agreed OECD Action Plan, ES is on track to have a working model (including process) for full curriculum area reviews ready for April 2024. The pilot for Expressive Arts in January 2024 has been shaped by the learning from the other pilots and offers a ‘test run’ of such a model.

11. Further work is currently ongoing in Maths, following the second national event in October. This includes a planned meeting of the more intensive sub group in

January and a full national event in March 2024. The Health & Wellbeing subgroup is also due to meet this coming term. These will take forward work looking to clarify the position of knowledge in these curriculum areas.

12. Outputs and evaluations are currently being analysed following the Modern Languages event in October, as are those from the Political Literacy meeting from December. This will determine the next steps for both these groups in relation to identifying, prioritising and updating knowledge and skills. They will also explore the extent to which knowledge can be clarified within the current or alternative frameworks.

13. Expressive Arts will hold its first pilot review event at the end of January. The work on Political Literacy will also align with work being undertaken in a similar manner by a group considering a framework for Social Justice and Equality. Other cross curricular events are planned for Financial Literacy and Learning for Sustainability.

Education Scotland
January 2024

## Annex A: Detail on the discussions about knowledge

### Clarifying knowledge

1. The approach adopted for the Social Studies review focused on 'unpacking' the existing Es&Os. This helped identify knowledge, either explicitly or implicitly, referenced in the Es&Os.

2. This process indicated that there was both a lack of clarity for knowledge within Es&Os as well as areas where there appeared to be no reference to knowledge.

3. The discussion in all the pilot reviews identified potential consequences for attainment and understanding as a result of a lack of clarity. For example in the maths review it was suggested that in upper primary, there may be issues with following a 'checklist' approach of the Es&Os.

4. The activities in the reviews provided exemplification when learning about fractions. Maths specialists indicated that effective understanding of fractions requires several Es&Os to be bundled together to promote sound conceptual understanding.

5. However, it appeared that the Es&Os were being addressed in a linear manner in some settings. This was felt by maths specialists to limit understanding of mathematical concepts. There was also a sense that there may be an over-focus on the Es&Os in planning. In some cases this resulted in these being seen by practitioners as the effective purposes of the curriculum.

6. Participants also identified potential consequences of a lack of clarity for the position of knowledge on transitions from primary to secondary. In a number of the reviews, secondary practitioners in particular highlighted the impact of interpretations of knowledge at school levels. Differing interpretations were felt to

create variations in the knowledge base of learners moving to secondary from feeder primary schools. This, it was postulated, then undermined confidence of secondary staff who then responded to the lack of a common base of knowledge by 'starting again'. This was viewed as a potential barrier to progression.

7. It was felt that problems such as these could be addressed by providing greater clarity (and thus consistency) of what learners would be expected to know by the end of the primary stage. Similar challenges were identified in relation to the transition from the BGE to the Senior Phase.

8. Providing greater clarity for knowledge across the CfE levels was also seen as a potential solution to concerns expressed about moderation activities. These included issues such as the practicability of moderation processes and a lack of a clear standard to base moderation discussions around. These also link into some wider issues identified in the OECD report regarding understandings of Es&Os, Benchmarks and the uses of progression frameworks.

9. Greater clarity on the knowledge learners should have at key points in learning could also go some way to improve tracking and monitoring processes.

10. These observations are consistent with the messages also contained within All Learners in Scotland Matter: Our National Discussion on Education (2023) which states, "As part of the review of the curriculum the technical framework of the BGE (including the Experiences and Outcomes) needs to be re-visited to ensure it is still fit for purpose". It was suggested that there should be greater clarity but not prescription. It was also raised frequently that the creation of yet another level of national guidance and documentation must be avoided.

**Conceptualising knowledge**

11. The first pilot review for Maths identified challenges practitioners faced in trying to conceptualise or define knowledge and, as outlined by the OECD, "recognising knowledge goes beyond disciplines and subjects".

12. This has highlighted the significance of understanding of the differences between knowledge, facts and content. A specific criticism of the 'knowledge-rich' approach has been that it has promoted the memorisation of facts and a 'transmission' model of education.

13. The reviews so far have surfaced a 'disciplinary' focus of discussions. The Social Studies review, for example, had also considered previous work on a 'skills' framework for social subjects. This had readily identified 'subject specific' skills (such as evaluation and analysis) but had omitted any reference to the development of wider transverse skills.

14. As outlined in the OECD 2021 report "knowledge does not necessarily need to be equated with subject specific content and can be discipline based (in smaller or broader learning areas), as well as interdisciplinary-orientated (around themes or projects)".

15. This would then appear to raise questions of how, and where, in reviews focusing on curriculum areas, opportunities are provided within the curriculum to enable learners to develop the knowledge and skills to prepare for life, personal development and the world of work.

16. It highlights some potential challenges relating to who needs to be engaged in curriculum review processes. Some curriculum area specialists faced difficulties when considering wider knowledge and skills and the totality of the curriculum. This highlights the risks of only engaging curriculum specialists and of proceeding with curriculum area reviews without consideration of the totality and purposes (or the big ideas) of the wider curriculum.

17. It should be noted that interdisciplinary knowledge has featured in some of the pilot reviews, though more so in the discussion in the cross curricular reviews.

**Progression**

18. The issue of progression was identified on a number of occasions in the reviews and despite the creation of a range of progression frameworks at local levels there was still disagreement on the benefits of these. Again themes of clarity, and a need to revisit the current Es&Os framework, arose during discussions generated by the activities that focused on the idea of creating a framework for knowledge.

19. Opportunities to address these issues by considering alternative technical frameworks resonated strongly, for example in the first meetings of the maths subgroup when exploring a ‘Big Ideas’ model.

**An Alternative Framework**

20. A ‘Big Ideas’ model would seem to provide greater clarity on the role and position of knowledge. This model, sometimes referred to as ‘know-do-understand’ (see below) was explored by the maths subgroup as part of their follow up to the activities and feedback from the first maths event in February 2023.

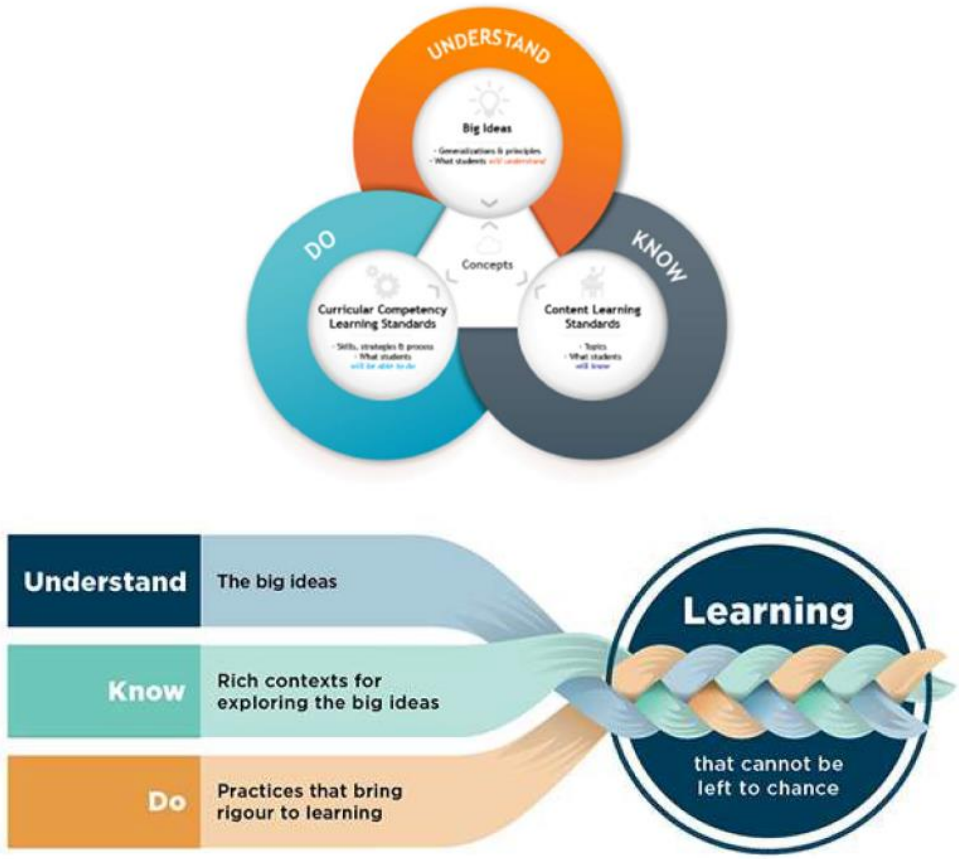



**Fig 1.0**: Conceptual high-level examples of Big Idea Frameworks from British Columbia and New Zealand.

21. This led to collaboration between the maths subgroup and educators from British Columbia and also the involvement of British Columbia educators with the wider pilot review group in October 2023.

22. Interestingly, the work of the Health & Wellbeing pilot review group has arrived at some similar conclusions even though they used an entirely different methodology for their review. As part of their approach, the group focused on a 'blanks slate' approach based on designing a Health and Wellbeing curriculum from the bottom up.

23. The maths review identified similar potential benefits when exploring the British Columbia approach, focusing in particular on the clarity this type of approach offered for knowledge. See for example Curriculum | Building Student Success – B.C. Curriculum (gov.bc.ca).

24. A significant piece of learning was that flexibility was needed across the different curriculum areas. For instance, within the parameters of the big ideas model the outputs had to recognise and reflect the specific circumstances of different curriculum areas.

## Cross-curricular knowledge

25. The significance of cross curricular knowledge was raised in all three curriculum areas involved in the initial pilot reviews. These were highlighted following discussions particularly focused on future orienting the curriculum and also how the curriculum areas could contribute to the development of the four capacities.

26. For instance in response to the activities used in the first maths review event, the significance of financial literacy was identified repeatedly by participants in relation to both how maths can contribute to the development of the four capacities and when considering what knowledge needed to be included in a future oriented maths/numeracy curriculum. Outputs from the maths event also identified how maths/ numeracy could contribute to other cross curricular themes such as citizenship and sustainability.

## The Purpose of Knowledge

27. Discussions on cross curricular knowledge have also led to the exploration of the organisation of the BGE, particularly in secondary schools. An alternative model could see the secondary BGE organised into broader learning areas, for example, based on cross curricular themes, 'big ideas' or 'core literacies'. This could align with aspirations to ensure that all learners are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to operate independently and as active citizens in the 21st century.

28. These 'core literacies' could aim to ensure learners are literate and numerate, have the digital knowledge and skills required to operate in a rapidly changing society, are politically, financially and scientifically literate, understand sustainability, are culturally literate and secure in their own health and wellbeing. This could then provide a rationale for the elements of knowledge to prioritise and act as a basis for developing a common base of knowledge and skills for all learners by the end of the BGE. For instance 'social literacy' was identified as one of the outcomes from the initial Health & Wellbeing event.

29. Tensions however exist between such an alternative purpose for the BGE and the need to promote progression and preparing learners to access the Senior Phase. This tension was highlighted during discussions on the maths pilot and appeared to be more relevant for hierarchical subjects. However, it may be that this could help shape decisions on the prioritisation of knowledge and skills within curriculum areas. This may have a bigger influence on more horizontal curriculum areas.

## Annex B: Summary of key messages from the pilot reviews

1. There are a number of themes emerging from the work of the Pilot Curriculum Reviews.

2. These themes include:

- The need to clarify the position of knowledge. This aligns with advice from the OECD (2021) that "clarifying the role of knowledge in the vision of CfE is the first step to strengthen the coherence of CfE".
- Consideration is required of the totality of the curriculum and the position of knowledge as the systemic improvement cycle begins.
- A willingness from those involved in the Pilot Curriculum Reviews and from teachers in particular, to consider alternative technical frameworks that might provide greater clarity but without resorting to the dangers of strict specification. [Clarity vs Specificity]
- A greater clarity linking the position of knowledge to how knowledge and skill can develop the 4 capacities is needed. The curriculum area 'Principles and Practices' documentation should be reviewed as part of this process.
- A clear reluctance to create new or additional levels or layers of guidance (when clarifying the position of knowledge). New, simplified and clear guidance is needed.
- Curriculum review is a specific opportunity to develop a clearer and more streamlined framework. This might thus address the issues surfaced by the OECD (2021) regarding "the complexity and overload due to numerous elements including 'expectations and outcomes; benchmarks: moderations; progression levels and more' leading to a 'cluttered', 'over-accessorised curriculum' which includes 'specific, somewhat unnecessary, jargon"
- A 'big ideas' model may provide a means to deal with decisions on what knowledge (and skills) to prioritise.
- There are potential opportunities through curriculum review to address deeper 'structural' challenges with CfE. These can include:
    - o Alignment between the BGE and Senior Phase,
    - o tracking and monitoring
    - o processes for moderation
    - o barriers to attainment
    - o barriers to effective transitions
    - o ambiguities over progression and achievement of a level.
- There has been significant learning from the pilot reviews for how a process of curriculum review can be carried out. There are risks arising from curriculum area reviews of an over focus on traditional disciplinary academic knowledge and skills. Consideration must therefore be given to how this can be avoided as a result of decisions on who is involved in reviews, how these reviews will be led or who will have overview of the work of the reviews.

**Some issues for further discussion**

3. The recent statement from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has set the direction for the curriculum improvement cycle and the position of knowledge. The statement indicated that in 2024 "….we will begin a Curriculum improvement cycle. This will include curriculum content, the role of knowledge, transitions between primary and secondary and alignment between the broad general education and the senior phase".

Outlined below are a number of high level questions for CAB:

- What should be the purpose(s) of knowledge within the curriculum?

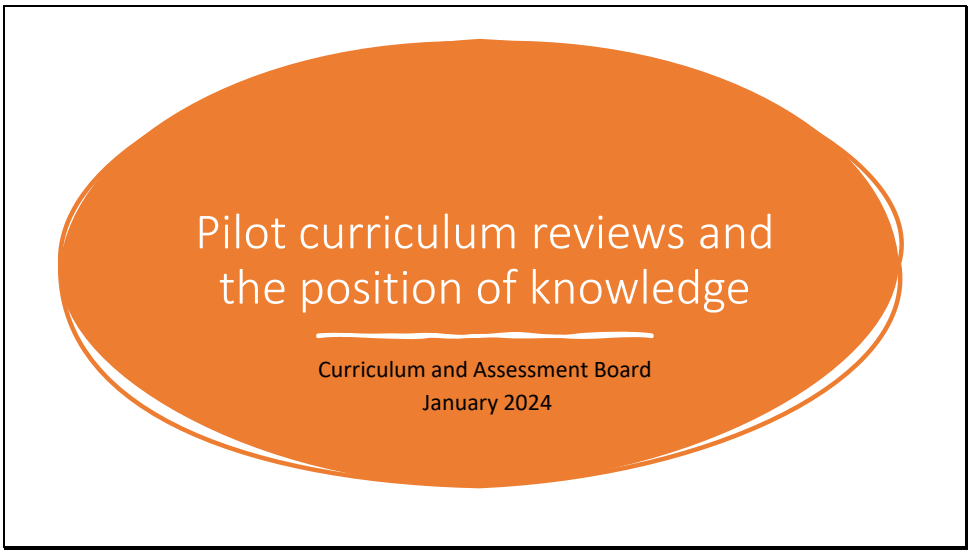
- How can greater clarity on the position of knowledge be provided that avoids risks of over-prescription?
- To what extent is it possible for knowledge be clarified within the current technical framework, and in doing so does not add further levels of guidance and documentation or further cluttering the curriculum?

*If time:*

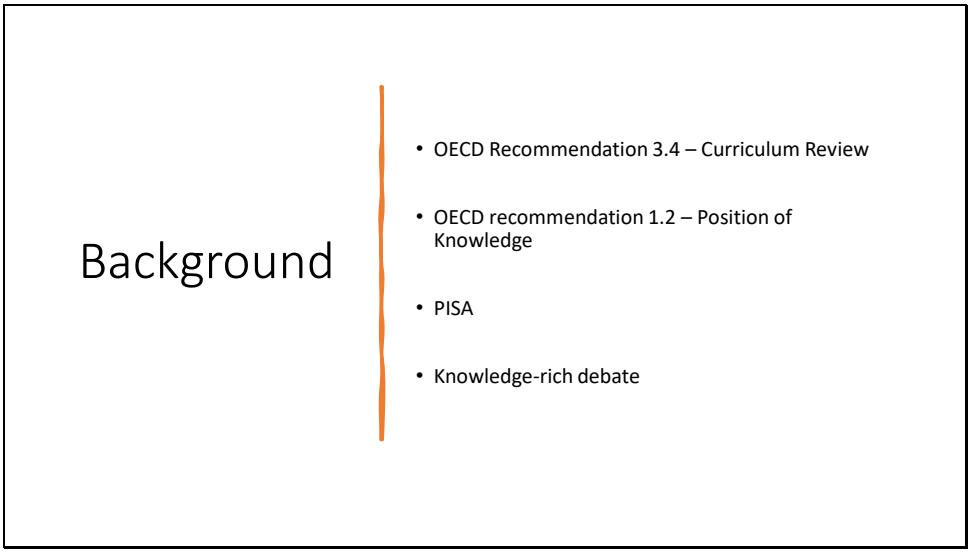
- How can review processes and structures avoid an over-concentration on disciplinary knowledge and skills?
- What are the practicalities that need to be considered and what would be required for successful implementation of changes to the curriculum

***Enclosure 4 – PowerPoint for Role of knowledge in the curriculum areas, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

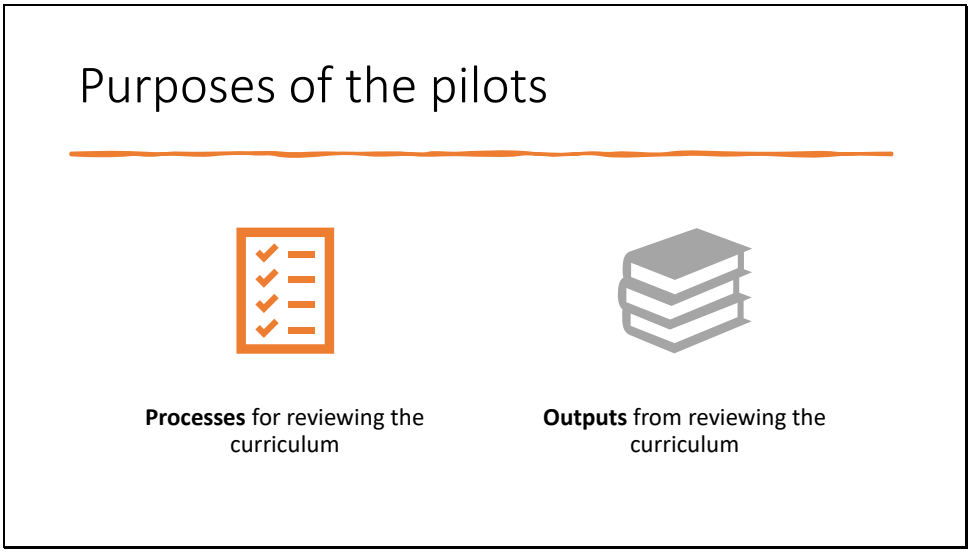
Slide 1 – Pilot curriculum reviews and the position of knowledge




Slide 2 - Background



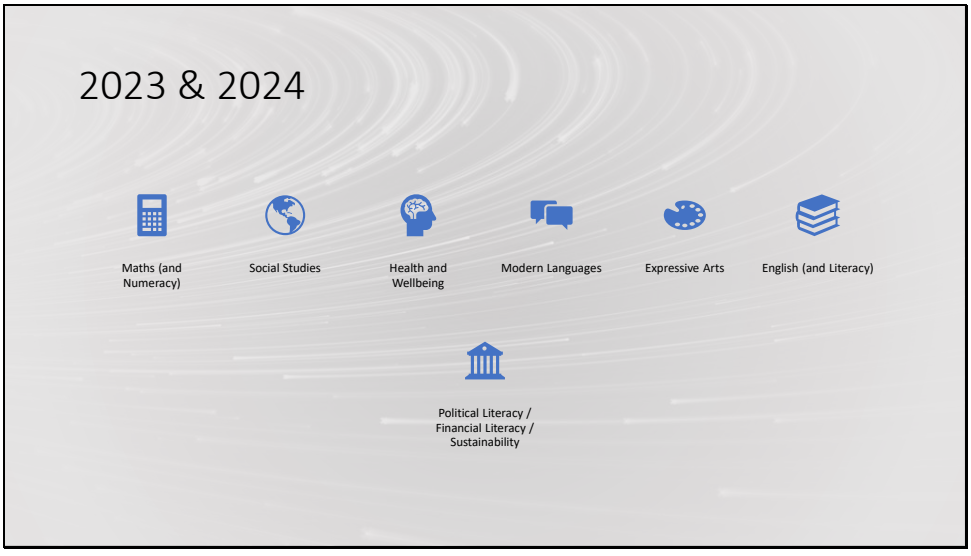
Slide 3 – Purposes of the pilots




Notes

- Who would be involved
- How they would be recruited-
- How engage (online in person)
- What methodologies used (open ended or structured )
- Outputs – what needed to future orientate the curriculum-
- what should be prioritised & deprioritised
- What tells us about position of KU

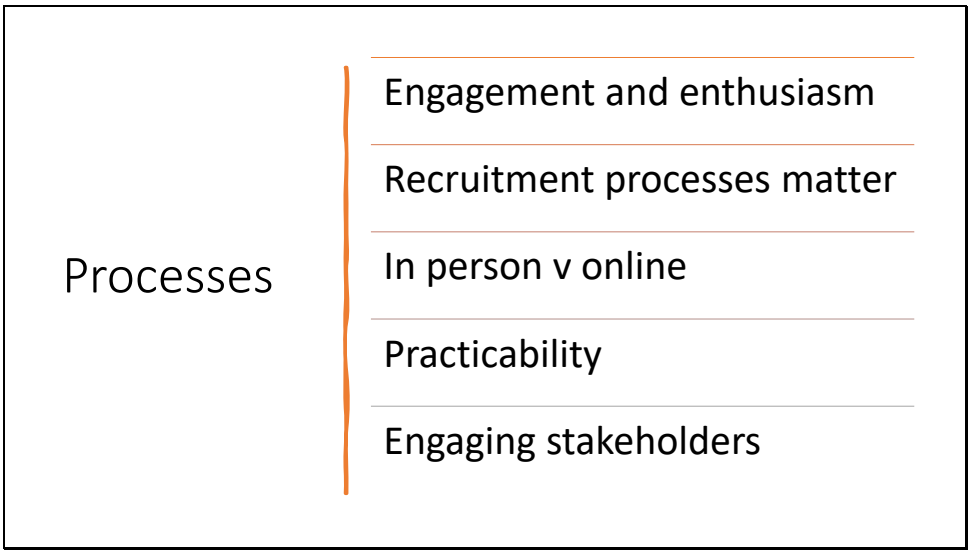
Slide 4 – 2023 and 2024



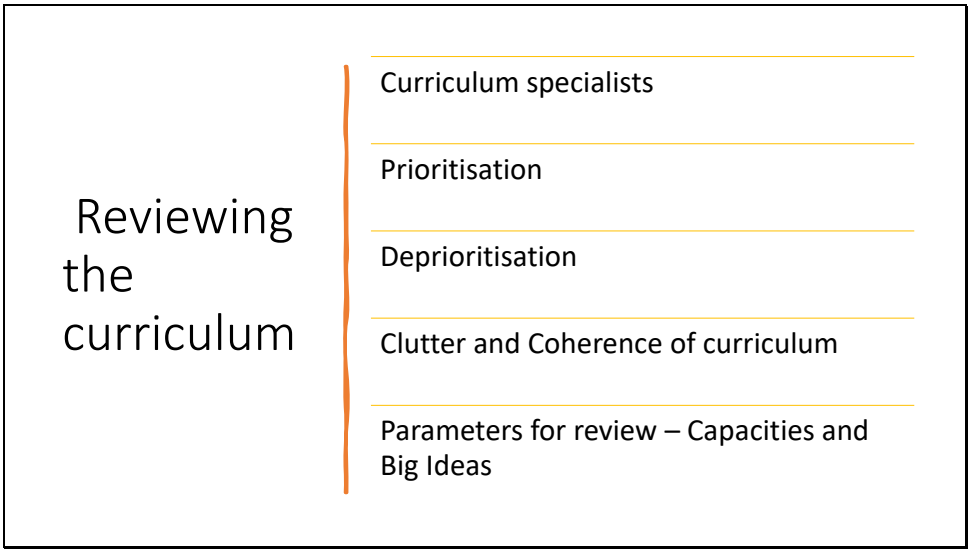

- Recruitment
- Numbers

- Who led by
- Methodologies
- How engage

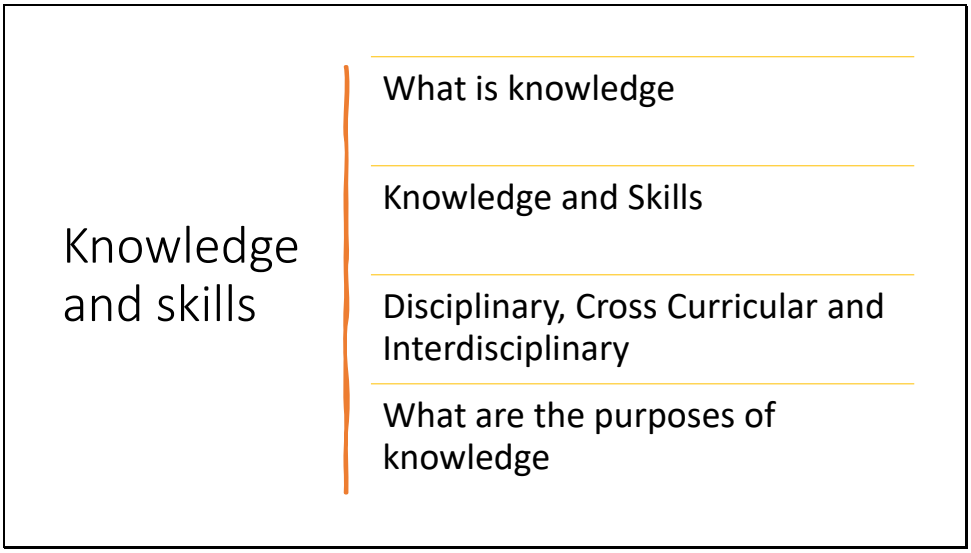
Slide 5 - Processes



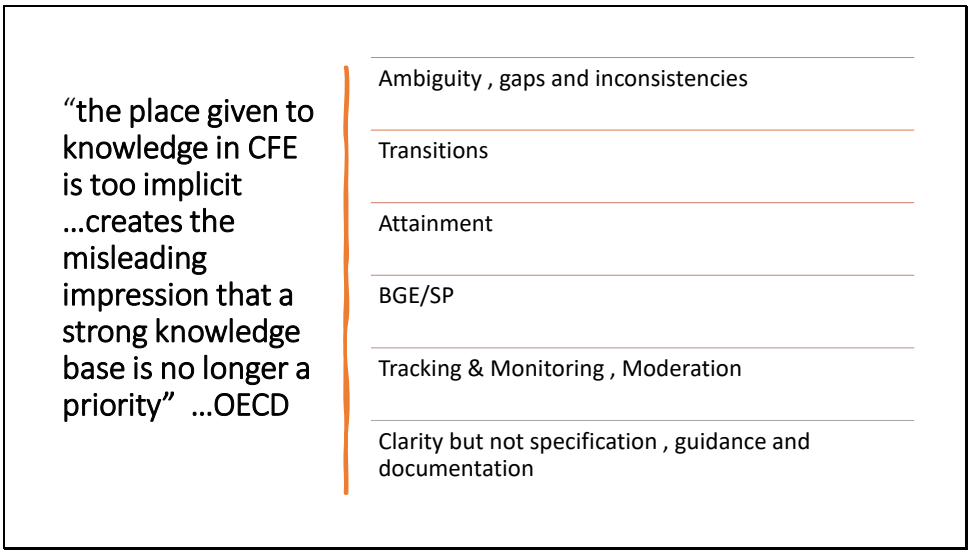

Slide 6 – Reviewing the curriculum



Slide 7 – Knowledge and skills




Slide 8 – Knowledge and skills continued



Slide 9 - Frameworks

## Frameworks

- Clarity & Simplification
- E&Os, Benchmarks, Progression Frameworks
- Knowledge and skills frameworks
- Alternative Technical Frameworks – Big Ideas model

Slide 10 – Big ideas framework

## Big ideas framework

**Maths**

Math K-9 – Big Ideas

| Grade | Number | Computational fluency | Patterning | Geometry and measurement | Data and probability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | • Numbers represent quantities that can be decomposed into smaller parts. | • One-to-one correspondence and a sense of 5 and 10 are essential for fluency with numbers. | • Repeating elements in patterns can be identified. | • Objects have attributes that can be described, measured, and compared. | • Familiar events can be described as likely or unlikely and compared. |
| 1 | • Numbers to 20 represent quantities that can be decomposed into 10s and 1s. | • Addition and subtraction with numbers to 10 can be modelled concretely, pictorially, and symbolically to develop computational fluency. | | • Objects and shapes have attributes that can be described, measured, and compared. | • Concrete graphs help us to compare and interpret data and show one-to-one correspondence. |
| 2 | • Numbers to 100 represent quantities that can be decomposed into 10s and 1s. | • Development of computational fluency in addition and subtraction with numbers to 100 requires an understanding of place value. | • The regular change in increasing patterns can be identified and used to make generalizations. | | • Concrete items can be represented, compared, and interpreted pictorially in graphs. |
| 3 | • Fractions are a type of number that can represent quantities. | • Development of computational fluency in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers requires flexible decomposing and composing. | • Regular increases and decreases in patterns can be identified and used to make generalizations. | • Standard units are used to describe, measure, and compare attributes of objects' shapes. | • The likelihood of possible outcomes can be examined, compared, and interpreted. |

**Health & Well Being**

- Current key CfE HWB ideas/ organisers


- Outputs from HWB pilot review event (February 2023)


Slide 11 – Key themes

## Key themes

- The urgent need to clarify the position of knowledge. This aligns with advice from the OECD (2021) that "**clarifying the role of knowledge in the vision of CfE is the first step to strengthen the coherence of CfE**".
- A willingness from those involved in the Pilot Curriculum Reviews and from teachers in particular, to consider alternative technical frameworks that might provide greater clarity but without resorting to the dangers of strict specification. [Clarity vs Specificity]
- Need for a wider review of the totality of the curriculum, and the position of knowledge within this to provide greater clarity linking the position of knowledge to how knowledge and skills can develop the 4 capacities. This provides an opportunity to review and update the curriculum area 'Principles and Practices' documentation as part of this process.

Slide 12 – Key themes

## Key themes

- A clear reluctance to create new or additional levels or layers of guidance (when clarifying the position of knowledge). New, simplified and clear guidance is needed.
- Curriculum review is a specific opportunity to develop a clearer and more streamlined framework. This might thus address the issues surfaced by the OECD (2021) regarding "**the complexity and overload due to numerous elements including 'expectations and outcomes; benchmarks: moderations; progression levels and more' leading to a 'cluttered', 'over-accessorised curriculum' which includes 'specific, somewhat unnecessary, jargon**".
- A 'big ideas' model may provide a means to deal with decisions on what knowledge (and skills) to prioritise.

Slide 13 – Key themes

## Key themes

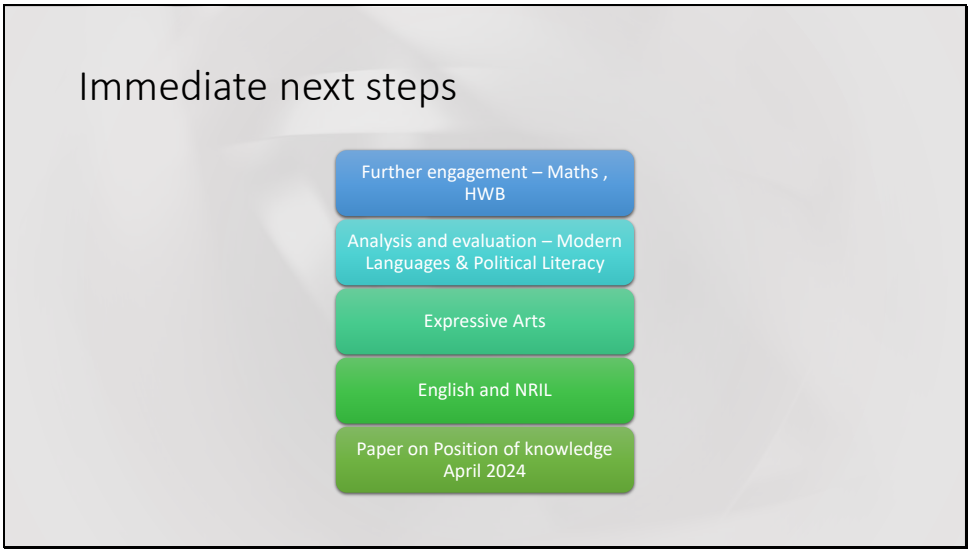
- There has been significant learning from the pilot reviews for how a process of curriculum review can be carried out.
- There are risks arising from curriculum area reviews and an over focus on traditional disciplinary academic knowledge and skills. Consideration must therefore be given to how this can be avoided as a result of decisions on who is involved in reviews, how these reviews will be led or who will have overview of the work of the reviews.

Slide 14 - Opportunities

## Opportunities

- There are potential opportunities through curriculum review to address deeper 'structural' challenges with CfE. These can include:
- a disconnect between the BGE and Senior Phase,
- weaknesses in tracking and monitoring
- onerous and impractical processes for moderation
- barriers to attainment
- barriers to effective transitions
- ambiguities over progression and achievement of a level.

Slide 15 – Immediate next steps



***Enclosure 5 – Local Attainment Stretch Aims, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

*OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE*

**January 2024**

**Scottish Attainment Challenge – Local Authority Stretch Aims for raising attainment and closing the poverty related attainment gap – Curriculum & Assessment Board**

**Background & purpose**

1. A key development in recent years to support and drive progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap has been the introduction of local stretch aims. This was introduced through the Scottish Attainment Challenge Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress in 2022. This included a requirement for local authorities to set ambitious but achievable stretch aims for progress in overall attainment and in closing the poverty related attainment gap in the 2022/23 academic year across a sub-set of the 13 National Improvement Framework measures of the poverty related attainment gap (core aims). An aggregation of local authorities' core stretch aims was published in December 2022.

2. In addition, local authorities set additional (plus) aims which recognise that progress is identified in a broader range of ways at local level than those set out nationally. These aims are of equal importance to the core aims.

3. In the early part of 2023 a lessons learned exercise was undertaken and local authorities fed into approaches to updating the Framework and the stretch aims process for 2023 onwards. A key part of this was the introduction of three-year stretch aims rather than single year stretch aims.

4. A further key change was to the measures in the senior phase. In 2022/23 we used the NIF measure from the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations (SSAILD) of school leavers achieving one or more award at SCQF level 5/6 (national qualifications only). Following feedback from stakeholders and LA partners we changed the senior phase measures to more fully capture the range of attainment and achievement of young people (for e.g. foundation apprenticeships), rather than primarily just SQA examinations. The measure for the stretch aims therefore is for leavers achieving one or more award at SCQF level 5/6 based on Insight (All SCQF Awards) information".

5. Those three-year stretch aims have now been set and submitted by local authorities and have been aggregated to create a national picture which was published on 12 December 2023.

6. This short paper summarises the key messages included in the publication and outline initial next steps to work with local authorities to support progress towards those aims over the 2023/24 – 2025/26 academic years.

**Key themes from the 2023/24 – 2025/26 stretch aims publication**

Progress towards 2022/23 stretch aims

7. The publication provides some commentary on the progress made towards 2022/23 stretch aims, including commentary on the 2022/23 ACEL data. It touches on outline indicators of progress towards senior phase aims based on local reporting, recognising that national data is not yet available. It also sets out the progress made by local authorities to successfully achieve the aggregate overall improvement stretch aim for the Annual Participation Measure (APM); and come close to the aggregated aim for the poverty related participation gap by seeing a record narrow gap.

8. The publication recognises that particular care needs to be taken when comparing the poverty related attainment gap since 2019 due to the different assessment and grading approaches taken in each year due to the pandemic.

9. As we look ahead, there is clear ambition amongst local authorities to raise attainment and close the poverty related attainment over the three years to 2025/26.

2025/26 stretch aims

10. Local authorities have now set stretch aims for 2025/26 in line with the guidance in the 2023 Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress.

11. Like in 2022/23 these have been set for both overall attainment and for closing the poverty related attainment gap.

12. Focusing on the poverty related attainment gap, local authorities' stretch aims point to a collective ambition to see strong progress, in particular when looking at progress over time since the Scottish Attainment Challenge was introduced. Looking at the data from the beginning of the Challenge (2016/17) and the stretch aims for 2025/26, there is clear ambition to reduce the poverty related attainment gaps across the core measures by:

- around 30% in primary school literacy and numeracy (ACEL P1, P4, P7 combined);
- around 28% for the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQF level 5 based on Insight (All SCQF Awards) information;
- around 18% for the proportion of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQF level 6 based on Insight (All SCQF Awards) information; and
- around 49% for the proportion of 16-19 olds participating in education, employment or training based on the Annual Participation Measure.

13. The health and wellbeing and "plus" aims set by local authorities cover a range of local priorities. However, there are some consistent areas of focus. This is particularly clear regarding improving attendance and/or engagement of pupils, with all local authorities setting stretch aims in this area. Other areas of focus include aims to improve the attainment and wellbeing of care experienced children and young people; aims for specific year groups or subject areas; aims for S3 literacy and numeracy; and local aims for closing the poverty related-attainment gap using

local measures of that gap.

14. The report recognises that the collective ambition across local authorities is encouraging as the system – and children and young people – navigate the lasting impact of the pandemic followed by the current cost-of living-crisis, both of which have raised the barriers to learning created by poverty.

15. However, the report also touches on variation – both in current attainment and poverty related attainment gaps and in stretch aims. These do vary significantly across local authorities, in many instances reflecting the range of different contexts in which local authorities operate. Some variation is reasonable and appropriate, but in general children and young people should have equal opportunities to succeed, suggesting that we have more work to do to raise attainment for all and reduce unwanted variation. The report does recognise, however, that if good progress is made towards the 2025/26 local stretch aims, we will see variation in performance across the core measures reduce, particularly in the poverty related attainment gap. Support and challenge to local authorities to make progress

16. The report re-iterates the support the Scottish Government will continue to provide schools and local authorities through its £1 billion investment in the SAC programme over the course of the parliamentary term. This includes:

- the continued investment in Pupil Equity Funding, empowering headteachers to develop local approaches to suit their children and young people's needs;
- investment in Strategic Equity Funding to local authorities to implement strategic approaches to closing the gap in their local authorities – and make progress towards their stretch aims; and
- continued funding to support care experienced children and young people's attainment and wellbeing.

17. Alongside that Education Scotland, particularly through its team of Attainment Advisors, continues to support and challenge schools and local authorities. This includes work with local authorities to:

a) understand and report on progress towards the long-term aims;
b) enhance tracking and monitoring processes;
c) identify and share good practice;
d) provide targeted support to drive progress, in doing so use the Attainment Advisor team more flexibly; and
e) publish materials to support improvement in learning and teaching, and continue to host and develop Scotland's Equity Toolkit.

**Next steps**

18. Having gathered and now published local authorities' stretch aims, the SAC programme intends to turn its attention towards delivering on the support and challenge touched on above. Allied to that the programme has a range of activities at an early stage of scoping which we will develop and deliver on in 2024 to help drive progress.

19. These include the following:

a) Re-introducing routine engagement between the SAC SROs and local authority directors of education.

b) Working closely with ADES through its Performance and Improvement Network to analyse the ambition evident in the system through the stretch aims and discuss approaches to supporting local authorities to make good progress towards those aims; and to discuss how to reduce unwarranted variation (recognising that not all variation is problematic) – this will take place alongside Education Scotland's work to use the AA team more flexibly to target support, whilst retaining a link AA for every local authority.

c) Exploring opportunities for the policy unit to engage more with local authority SAC leads, to build relationships, knowledge and understanding of local approaches, and inform the ongoing implementation and development of the SAC programme, building on the existing Education Scotland SAC leads network.

d) Along a similar vein to the above having the policy unit engage directly with schools more often, listening to the system and adjusting the policy/influencing related policy appropriately. A key part of that is picking up existing links with teachers/headteacher through, for example, the professional associations, Education Scotland professional learning opportunities and other connections.

e) Link in with the new Curriculum for Excellence improvement cycle – starting with numeracy and maths.

f) Continue to link into a range of wider pieces of work on refining data sources and usage, developing statutory guidance, the reform programmes and exploring further opportunities to link with related policy areas and/or initiatives to support progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap.

g) Stay linked into the range of reform activity across Scottish education – ensuring impact on the most disadvantaged children and young people is a key consideration.

h) Engage with officials in neighbouring countries to learn what has been/is working to tackle poverty related attainment gaps, sharing knowledge and experience.

i) Look ahead to the programme beyond 2025/26, mindful of an election in 2026, understanding what elements of the programme/practice are most sustainable for continued impact beyond the lifetime of the current iteration of the programme.

20. Through each of the above we aim to be able to draw out and share good examples of work to close the poverty related attainment gap and raise the profile of that work to help develop a positive narrative around both the ambition and the progress in closing the gap.

21. These outline ambitions are not exclusive and build on a range of other activity underway on the evaluation, including its work to engage children and young people in partnership with Young Scot and Child Poverty Action Group; the existing SAC leads network led by Education Scotland; the Virtual School Headteachers' Network facilitated by the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS); Education Scotland's suite of workstreams for the academic year; and ongoing delivery of the SAC funding streams.

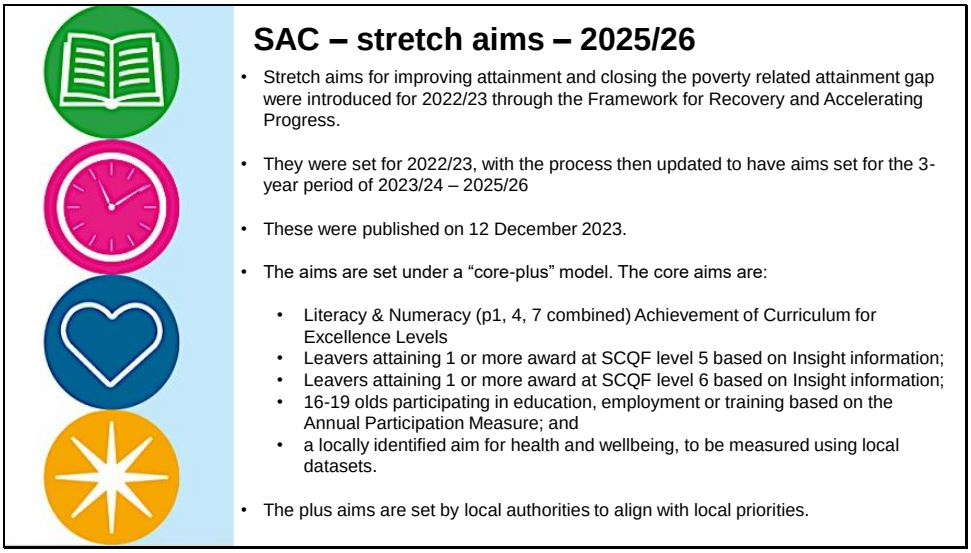
**Conclusion**

22. The Curriculum Advisory Board is invited to:
    a) comment on the aggregated local ambitions progress in raising attainment and closing the gap evident in the 2025/26 local stretch aims;
    b) discuss/ comment on what will best support local authorities and schools to make progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap and improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty; and
    c) share views on how curriculum improvement activity can help close the poverty related attainment gap.

***Enclosure 6 – PowerPoint presentation for Local Attainment Stretch Aims, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

Slide 1 – The Scottish Attainment Challenge

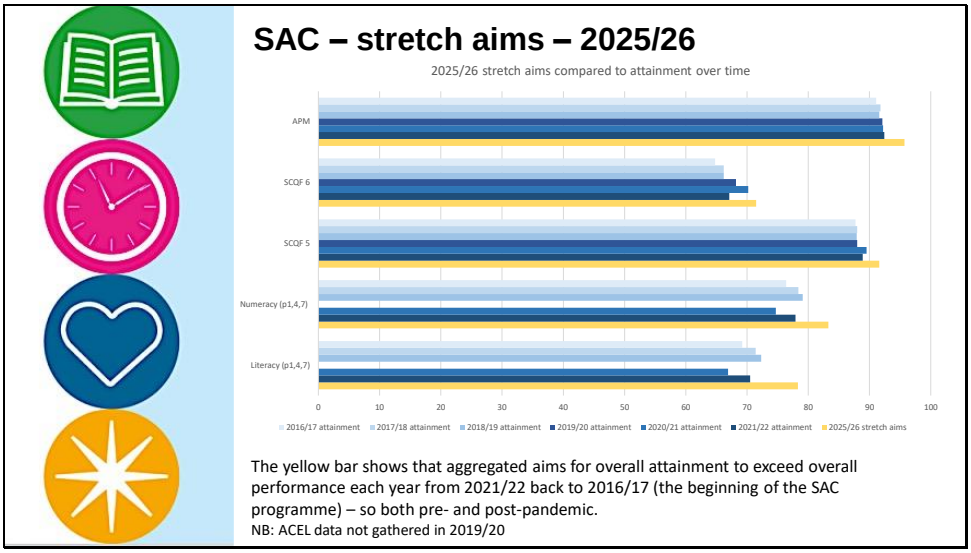

Slide 2 – SAC, stretch aims, 2025/26



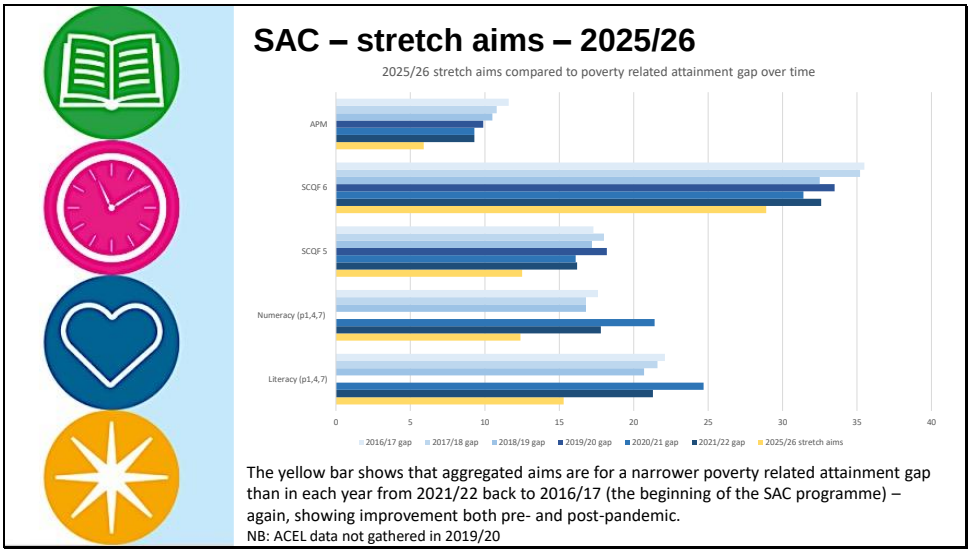

Slide 2, notes:

- Given these aims are for the final year of the SAC programme, it's worth looking back to the first year for which there's comparable data
- This gives us a long term picture of progress
- Importantly the data shows that there is a collective ambition to improve upon all previous years' performance since 2016/17 across all core measures
- Including the somewhat elevated peaks for the senior phase in 20/21 and 21/22 as a result of the ACM

Slide 3 – SAC, stretch aims, 2025/26




Slide 4 - SAC, stretch aims, 2025/26



Slide 5 - SAC, stretch aims, 2025/26

## SAC – stretch aims – 2025/26

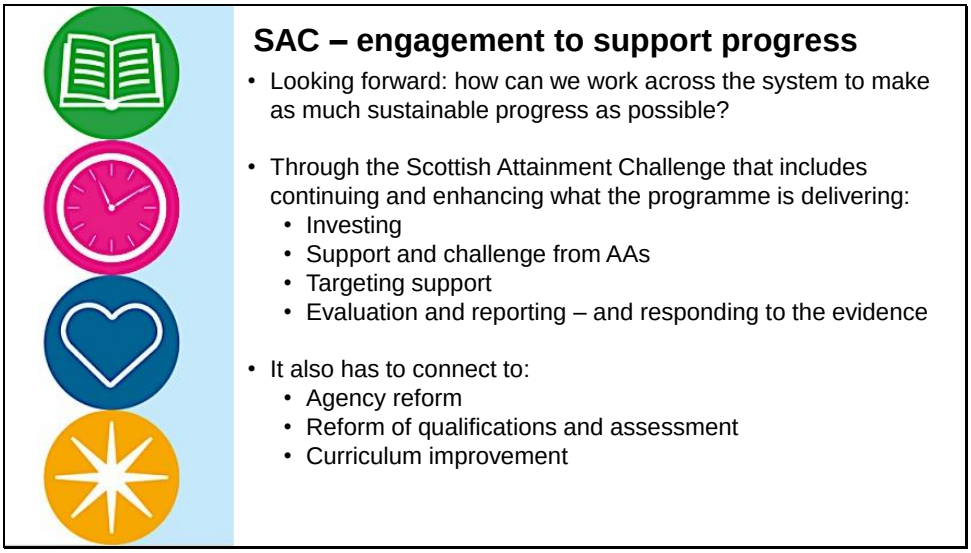
- HWB & plus aims – key themes:
  - Encouraging degree of consistency with last year, but with some narrowing of the range.
  - All 32 LAs have stretch aims for attendance, inc some for care experienced children and young people and those with additional support needs. Also, lots of aims re. engagement.
  - Some LAs setting aims for closing poverty related attainment gaps based on alternative measures of poverty to suit their context.
  - Strong focus on aims for Care Experienced Children and Young People.
  - Significant number of LAs looking at component parts of primary school aims, e.g. p1, p4 and p7 individually; also re. BGE, a focus on S3 literacy and numeracy.

Slide 6 - SAC, stretch aims, 2025/26

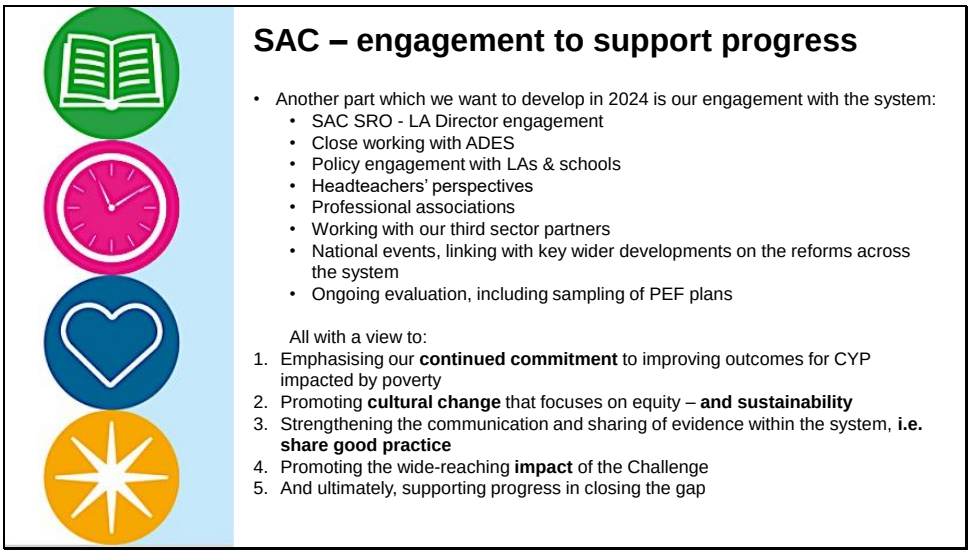
## SAC – stretch aims – 2025/26

- Smoother process than last year.
- There is variation in both progress and ambition (as expected). The aims, if achieved, would see reduced variation – how to work together to tackle that and support the system to make as much progress as possible in reducing unwanted variation.
- Overall picture is a positive one:
  - The collective ambition shows that despite the various challenges of recent years, if good progress is made towards them, these aims would see a step change in the poverty related attainment gap.
  - Evidence of ambition for overall improvement and ambition for improvement over the long term, despite the challenges faced by children and young people – and of course schools and LAs – through the pandemic, cost-of-living pressures.
  - Ambitions for steady and sustainable progress – but is it enough?

Slide 7 – SAC, engagement to support progress




Slide 8 – engagement to support progress



Slide 9 – For discussion

## For discussion

- How can we best work with schools and local authorities to make good progress towards the collective ambition set out local stretch aims?
- How can we work together to make as much progress as possible in reducing unwanted variation in progress?
- How can we best connect with the range of reform work?
- How can curriculum improvement help close the poverty related attainment gap?

***Enclosure 7 – ACEL data and PISA results overview, Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2022-23 - gov.scot, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

[Redacted s25(1)] - Information otherwise accessible

Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels 2022-23 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

***Enclosure 8 – ACEL data and PISA results overview: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022): Scotland's results – highlights – gov.scot, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

[Redacted s25(1)] - Information otherwise accessible

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2022): Scotland's results - highlights - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

***Enclosure 9 – PowerPoint Slides for ACEL data and PISA results overview, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024***

**Slide 1 – PISA and ACEL results**

# Curriculum and Assessment Board – January 2024

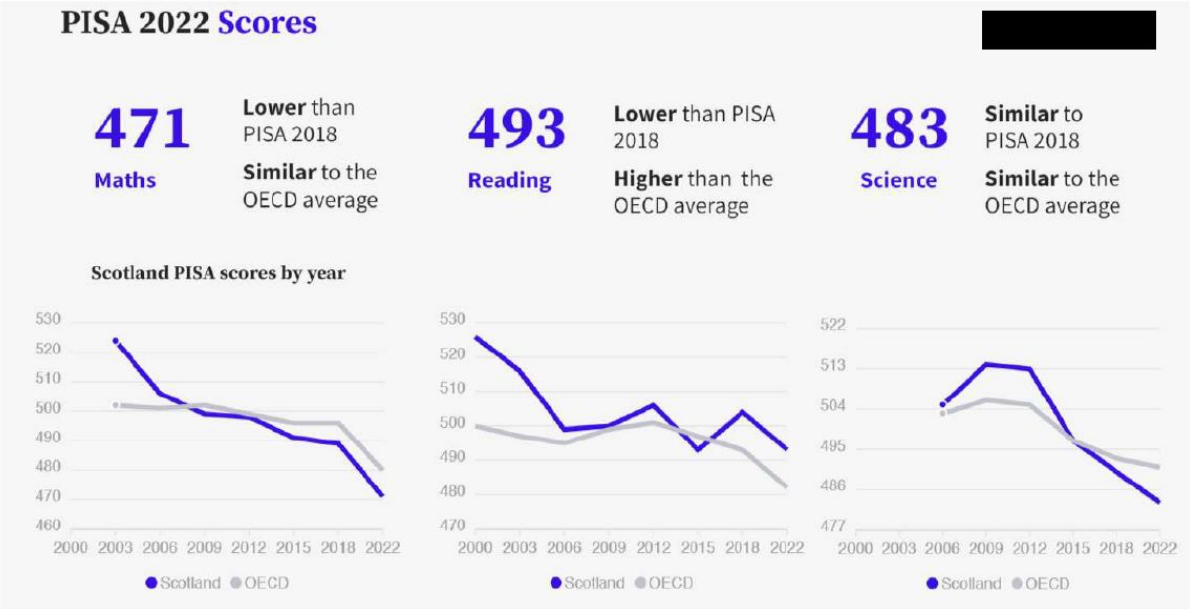
## PISA and ACEL results

[redacted] Curriculum Unit

[redacted] and [redacted] Education Analytical Services

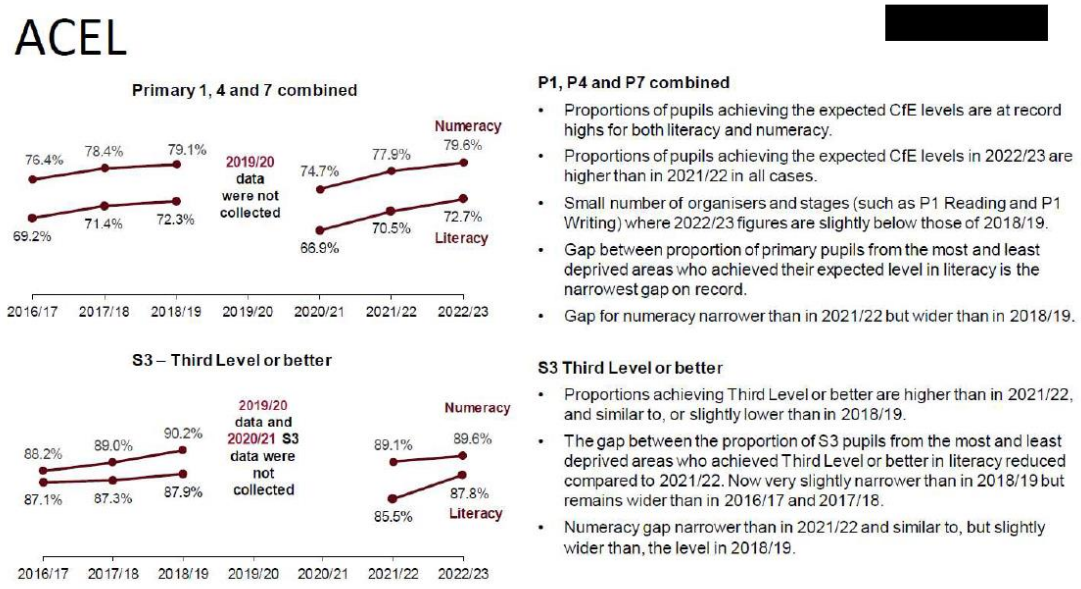
[Redacted s38(1)(b)], [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Slide 2 – PISA 2022 Scores**



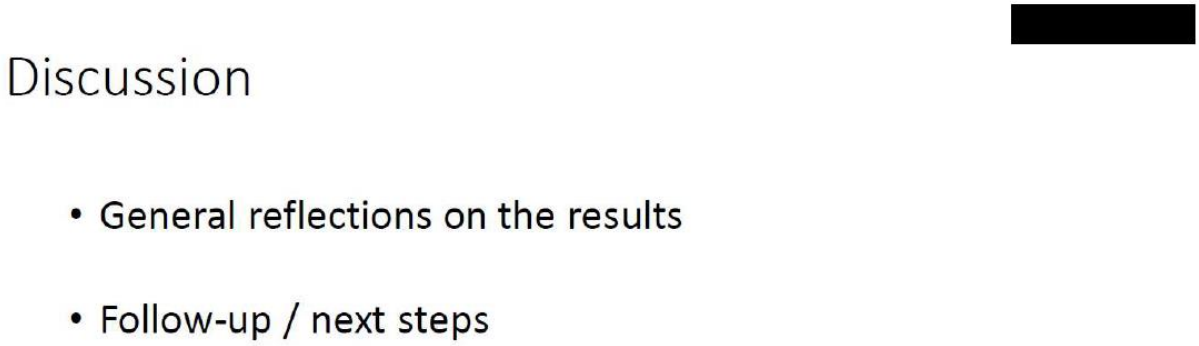

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Slide 3 – ACEL**




[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

**Slide 4 – Discussion**




[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

## *Enclosure 10 – Response to the position of knowledge paper, Curriculum Assessment Board Meeting 30 January 2024*

**THE POSITION OF KNOWLEDGE IN CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE – A RESPONSE TO THE PAPER TABLED AT CAB, 30/01/2024**

***Mark Priestley, Joe Smith and Lizzie Rushton***
***University of Stirling***

We are delighted to see this topic getting some attention, as part of the CfE reform cycle. The issue of knowledge, and specifically the so-called downgrading of knowledge, has long been a source of criticism, amongst curriculum scholars, of competency-based curriculum approaches such as CfE (e.g., Young & Muller, 2011; Biesta, 2014; Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). The critiques centre largely on what might be termed 'powerful knowledge' (Young & Muller, 2011) or its absence in the curriculum. This relates to two main aspects:

1. **What knowledge might be considered as 'powerful'**. Young and Muller make a distinction between disciplinary and everyday knowledge, arguing that students need to be exposed to the former in schools, as many will not have such opportunities otherwise. Such knowledge represents the accumulated wisdom of humankind – understandings of how the world works, formulated by communities of scholars over the ages. This, of course, needs to be considered in relation to the question of '**whose knowledge?**', raising important issues about how the curriculum might be decolonised.

2. **The question of what knowledge is powerful for**. Having such knowledge is necessary in order to participate meaningfully in society's conversations (e.g., for active and critical citizenship or to possess the technical knowledge needed for increasingly complex workplaces). Education systems which restrict access to powerful knowledge, or which differentiate it socially, limit access to society's conversations. This is an ethical issue, as pointed out by Joe Smith (2022), because to deny students access to powerful knowledge is to deny them understanding of the complexity of the world.

Our recent work (e.g. Priestley, et al., 2024 in press) suggests that the majority of countries worldwide have fallen into the trap of downgrading or neglecting knowledge questions in their curricular specification, in a headlong rush to promote skills acquisition. This ignores the fact that people need knowledge with which to demonstrate or apply skills; moreover, in the lack of central specification, research in Scotland suggests that teachers fall back on instrumental (e.g., meeting the needs of future assessment or offering 'sexy' topics to attract students to a subject) rather than educational rationales for selecting content (e.g., Shapira et al. 2023; Smith, 2019). This in turn can lead to an enacted or experienced curriculum that lacks coherence and any sense of connection with educational purposes.

The Education Scotland paper is a welcome development because it raises the issue of knowledge, and because it starts to identify some of the issues which impinge upon how knowledge is addressed in the curriculum. In particular, we welcome the recognition that:

- a curriculum framework needs to 'clarify the way that knowledge is covered';
- the technical form (Luke et al., 2012) of the curriculum (i.e., its expression as a framework of hierarchical learning outcomes) raises concerns 'in terms of the content and its suitability as the technical framework which supports the four capacities of CfE';

- and the curriculum review offers an opportunity to update the curriculum, developing 'clearer, more simplified guidance for practitioners ("instead of" rather than "in addition to")'

The Education Scotland paper thus provides a useful starting point for addressing what is a crucial curricular issue; one that should involve a much deeper and more nuanced discussion than previously, drawing especially on expertise in the areas of disciplinary knowledge and curriculum studies. There is considerable work required to reframe the curriculum to take more account of the importance of knowledge. In the light of the above, we offer some observations, which may guide the review process.

**What is knowledge?**

We start by emphasising that we are not advocating a simplistic, so-called knowledge-rich approach, which has become popularised in some parts of the world, notably England. A curriculum which properly takes account of knowledge will consider what constitutes disciplinary knowledge. A useful distinction here is as follows:

- 'knowing that' – propositional knowledge, including general and discipline-specific substantive concepts, set out in progression frameworks;
- 'knowing how' – this includes procedural knowledge, related to skills; essentially the ability to apply knowledge to practical and theoretical situations. It also includes
- 'knowing how to know' – epistemic knowledge of the structures and processes of disciplines that allows us to engage in enquiry in particular domains (e.g. scientific method).

By taking account of the above distinctions, one can avoid the all-too-common tendency to conflate knowledge with information/facts/content, with the subsequent conclusion that knowledge=facts and is therefore inert (and can be easily Googled by anyone wishing to know). There needs to be an understanding that the structured development of knowledge itself illuminates new ways of seeing the world, and is fundamental to any educative process. Related to the conflation of knowledge and facts, there is a pervasive idea that knowledge can be counted as discrete, itemised (and atomised) statements, to be ticked off as evidence that someone is educated (see below on the organisation of knowledge).

Another key point here to reiterate, is that skills cannot be developed in a knowledge vacuum; it is necessary to teach the knowledge, then provide pedagogical opportunities through which skills can be practised and developed.

**What knowledge should be developed through schooling?**

This is a key question, implicitly devolved to schools under CfE. There is a lack of adequate specification – either of content or the processes through which content might be selected from the corpus of human knowledge. Crucially, **content selection should derive from consideration of education purposes** – both individual and societal. We note here that there is a logical progression from **'why?' -> 'what?' ->'how?**'. This has tended to become subverted in recent discussion by an unhelpful progression, derived from the world business innovation, of 'why?' -> 'how?' ->'what?'. We also note that the Refreshed Narrative of CfE specifies the former. The key point here is that clarity of educational purpose should lead to questions about what should be taught – with consideration of how there should be progression in learning, and how the overall curriculum articulates (e.g. how does learning at any given stage in science fit

with learning in the humanities). Only then, should how questions (pedagogical, organisational) be considered.

**How should knowledge be organised?**

A related question is provision. Society tends to view education in terms of traditional subjects, with occasional additions (e.g. Modern Studies) to address emerging needs. Subjects are conflated with disciplines. There are at least three key problems here: 1] subjects have to select from disciplinary knowledge, rather than being mirrors of disciplines; 2] some subjects are multi-disciplinary (e.g. Modern Studies); and 3] there are areas where subjects cannot adequately address questions in isolation, and where an interdisciplinary approach is required. These raise questions about whether the traditional subjects model is indeed always appropriate, whether it is adequately developed when it is applicable, and whether alternative forms of organisation are needed to supplement it. Deng (2012) has addressed these issues in his work. For Deng, the proper question is 'what knowledge should be selected?'. He distinguishes clearly between disciplines (as the main source of knowledge) and subjects (as containers or mechanisms for organising knowledge in school). Thus, there is a clear distinction between disciplinary knowledge and school content, organised into subjects, providing one, but not the sole approach to organising knowledge in schools. There are very clear implications here for both curriculum planning, and the framing of knowledge question in curriculum policy.

**How might knowledge be specified?**

This brings us to the big question of how a national curriculum should specify content, thus addressing knowledge questions. One question is the degree of specification. Some curricula, (e.g., some iterations/subjects in the English National Curriculum) specify in minute detail. Others specify high level concepts and leave it up to schools to select content that allows these to be developed. Our preference is for the latter, but with clear specification of some core content, questions that need to be addressed and processes to be followed when selecting content. This relates further to the question of the technical form. The current technical form of CfE (the hierarchical framework of generic learning outcomes) is not a suitable model if we are seriously about knowledge in the curriculum, because it encourages an audit approach, driven by assessment, that in turn leads to a fragmented, and incoherent approach to the selection of content. Big ideas frameworks (e.g. https://www.ase.org.uk/bigideas ) have been adopted and developed in jurisdictions such as Wales and British Columbia, and show considerable promise as an approach to specifying knowledge in a coherent manner, as a conceptual progression framework – and as a replacement for the competency-based framing of CfE.

**Connecting everyday and powerful knowledge**

One final question to address is concerned with how we enable students to see the relevance in powerful knowledge. Often this is presented as a dichotomy – we either teach abstract knowledge, or we work with student interests. Recent work (e.g., Skelton, 2017; Smith & Jackson, 2021; Riddle et al., 2023) posits a more nuanced approach. This engages students with powerful knowledge, but from the starting point of the 'funds of knowledge' that they bring to school. One can point, for example, to geography education that conceptualises disciplinary knowledge as being informed by the geographies of the everyday spaces where humans live out their lives (Skelton, 2017), or a powerful knowledge+ approach (Riddle et al., 2023) that develops disciplinary understanding from the pedagogical starting point of the everyday concerns and interests of students. This is essentially a pedagogical approach, but stands as a powerful reminder that pedagogies are curriculum practices – pedagogy and content selection

cannot be disentangled, and the role of teachers as 'curriculum workers' of 'curriculum makers' is paramount here. It is worth noting that early findings from Riddle et al's (2023) project suggest increased engagement and attainment amongst traditionally marginalised groups of students.

Finally, we highlight the importance of spaces and communities of practice which enable ongoing dialogue about curriculum and curriculum making between practitioners, policy makers and education researchers. This is a fundamental rationale for the newly established Stirling Centre for Research into Curriculum Making.

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**Enclosure 11 Draft minute of January 30th 2024 meeting of the Curriculum Assessment Board, 30 January 2024**

[Redacted S27(1)] - Information intended for future publication