

TEACHER PANEL

ENSURING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SENIOR PHASE AND BEYOND

Purpose

1. This paper provides the Teacher Panel with an overview of the opportunities available to ensure that the Senior Phase curriculum meets the needs of all learners and provides a range of pathways that reflect young peoples' different abilities, learning styles and future career and learning aspirations.

The Teacher Panel is asked to consider the following:

- a) Do we have an appropriate range of pathways to suit learner needs?
- b) How are the national qualifications supporting the breadth of opportunities in the senior phase?

Background

The Senior Phase

2. As the key part of their Senior Phase, young people will look to acquire a range of qualifications and awards over S4 – S6. There are no pre-conceived notions about which qualifications and awards are taken at which stage of the Senior Phase; the guiding principle is that qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the Senior Phase.

Do we have an appropriate range of pathways to suit all learners' needs?

3. *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)* entitles every young person to a Senior Phase (S4-S6) where they can obtain qualifications, have opportunities to develop skills for learning, life and work and continue to progress towards the four capacities. Young people should also receive support in moving into positive and sustained destinations beyond school.
4. The Senior Phase curriculum should: include all young people aged 16 to 18; meet the needs of all learners whatever their aspirations; comprise more than programmes which lead to qualifications; have a continuing emphasis on health and wellbeing; and provide opportunities for personal achievement, service to others and practical experience of the world of work.
5. Illustrations and evidence of progress to develop a diverse range of pathways includes:
 - *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)* which supports the full realisation of the CfE entitlements as well as a curriculum design that includes an increased range of work-based learning pathways.

- The Career Education Standard 3-18 which outlines the entitlements and expectations in this area, exemplifies through the 'I can' statements what progress in the senior phase may look like with regard to employability skills and career pathways.
- year-on-year increase in the number of school leavers achieving vocational qualifications at SCQF level 5 and above. 12.8% of 2016/17 school leavers attained 1+ award at SCQF 5 or better. This is an increase of 2.1 percentage points since 2015/16, and an increase of 5.5 percentage points since the baseline in 2013/14.
- increasing number of Senior Phase enrolments on vocational pathways in colleges, at SCQF level 5 and above, since DYW was introduced. 4,510 young people were enrolled on these pathways as of 2016/17, an increase of 1,496 in 2015/16 (3,014) and an increase of 2,409 since the baseline in 2013/14 (2,101).
- increase in the number of young people starting Foundation Apprenticeships. In 2018, over 1,500 young people were enrolled on a Foundation Apprenticeship, an increase from 1,245 in 2017, 346 in 2016, 269 in 2015 and 63 in 2014, the baseline figure.
- *Scottish Baccalaureate*: this qualification sits at SCQF Level 7 and is a coherent group of current Higher and Advanced Higher Qualifications. It includes an interdisciplinary project that helps candidates to develop and show evidence of initiative, responsibility, and independent working — skills of real value in the worlds of higher education and work.
- *National Progression Awards, Skills for Work, Personal Development Awards, Leadership Awards, Certificate of Work Readiness, Enterprise and Employability and Youth achievement awards* all support learners' wider achievements and help develop their employability and career management skills.
- Secondary schools increasingly working with a range of partners, including colleges, universities, employers and youthwork to diversify their offers in the Senior Phase and provide opportunities for learners to work towards a range of relevant work-based qualifications in recognition of the needs and aspirations of all learners.
- We are also seeing collaboration between schools and universities to deliver learning to school pupils through, for example, the South East Scotland Academies Partnership, the Advanced Higher Hub at Glasgow Caledonian University and through the range of widening access programmes supported through the SFC's Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP).

Action under way to promote pathways

5. *The 15-24 Learner Journey Review Report*, published in May 2018, sets out 17 recommendations to ensure that education provision for young people is as effective and efficient as possible and provides more stepping stones for those needing most support. Many of the recommendations within the report relate to young people aged 15 to 18 learning in schools, colleges and other establishments and their transitions through the system.
6. Engagement, as part of the review, found that more information and advice was needed for young people, parents and staff. As such, a key priority of the Learner Journey Review is “Information, Advice, and Support”. Under this, we have a recommendation to develop a regional prospectus that will make clear what the offer is to Senior Phase pupils and help them to understand where courses can take them.
7. Another recommendation of the 15-24 Learner Journey Review is to develop a national communications strategy. This will promote various pathways and help develop understanding of the options available to young people in their Senior Phase.
8. The Scottish Government is currently undertaking research into the Senior Phase curricular offer. This research involves a survey going out to Head Teachers in January 2019 which will help develop our understanding around how the curriculum is designed and what the offer is for young people.
9. The Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) Collaboration Group has been established to identify and progress actions to support FA expansions in 2018-2019 and support the ambition for 5,000 places to be made available across Scotland in 2019. This work is led by an evidence-based approach to inform specific and targeted actions. Group membership includes: Skills Development Scotland; SG skills policy; SG Senior Phase unit; SG DYW programme office; SG DYW employer engagement policy; and Education Scotland.
10. Recognising wider learning and achievement and supporting young people in articulating its value has been highlighted as an important aspect in the latest profiling guidance released by Education Scotland.

Do the pathways offered suit learners needs?

11. The 15-24 Learner Journey Review looks at the offer for all learners including statutory leavers, looked after young people, gypsy-traveller young people, and those going onto Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). A need for joined-up, comprehensive support and better information and advice around learner pathways were some of the key findings of the research that fed into the Learner Journey Review.

12. We are seeing good progress. In 2016/17, 93.7% school leavers were in a positive initial destination (compared to 93.3% in 2015/16). A record 92.9% of school leavers in 2016/17 were in a positive destination nine months after leaving school – up from 91.4% for 2015/16. A record 38.3% of school leavers in 2016/17 were in Higher Education nine months after leaving school. There are fewer unemployed school leavers. The proportion of 2016/17 school leavers unemployed nine months after leaving school was 6.3%. This is down from 13.8% in 2009/10.
13. The number of 2016/17 school leavers unemployed nine months after leaving school was 3,246. This is down from 7,307 in 2009/10. The employment rate for young disabled people increased from 35.6% in January–December 2016 to 43.2% for the same period in 2017. This is an increase of 8.0 percentage points compared to the baseline figure of 35.2% (Jan-Dec 2014).
14. The proportion of looked after children in positive destinations is 76.0% in 2016/17. This is an increase of 4.8 percentage points since 2015/16, and an increase of 6.7 percentage points since the baseline figures were recorded in 2012/13.

How are the National Qualifications supporting the breadth of opportunities in the Senior Phase?

15. The SCQF helps young people, parents, employers etc. to identify the level that has been studied in a particular subject. This helps learners plan their learner journey and provides recognition of a very wide range of learning programmes.
16. The Scottish Government is committed to building the status of National 4 as a stand-alone qualification in its own right and a credible pathway through the Senior Phase.
17. On 31 October 2018, the Deputy First Minister announced that Fallback from National 5 to National 4 will be removed from academic year 2019/20. Removing Fallback is one of a number of actions to strengthen the credibility and value of National 4 as an important qualification in its own right. Grade D has been widened (from 45%-49% to 40%-49%) to ensure that borderline candidates can be presented for National 5.
18. In the context of strengthening the credibility and value of National 4 as an important qualification in its own right; National 4 is already being used successfully as a pathway for young people into modern apprenticeships, college courses, including SQA's wide range of vocational awards, national certificates and national progression awards. National 4 is also being used as a pathway into National 5 courses.
19. Universities continue to use Highers in their entry requirements. Record numbers are getting a place at university with over 37,000 students from Scotland now accepted to a university (whole UK).

20. Colleges accept pupils based on a wide range of qualifications and awards.

21. Over 61,000 skills-based qualifications, awards and certificates have been achieved this year – up from 47,747 in 2014. These help support applications to HE and FE as well as provide routes into training and employment.

Learning Directorate
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