

**Welsh Government
Curriculum for Wales
Progression Code
16 July 2021**

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation on Curriculum for Wales Progression Code.
2. NASUWT - The Teachers' Union, represents teachers and headteachers in Wales and across the United Kingdom.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT maintains that securing high outcomes for all children and young people means that action is needed to:
 - a. provide a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum experience fit for the 21st century;
 - b. ensure parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways and the cognitive, emotional, cultural, creative, ethical and social dimensions of learning;
 - c. require all state-funded schools and colleges to work together to secure a comprehensive curriculum entitlement for all 14 to 19 year-olds;
 - d. equip children and young people to be research-driven problem solvers;
 - e. extend entitlements for all children and young people to high-quality academic and vocational education, coupled with equality

- of access to high-quality, practical, hands-on, work-based learning opportunities;
- f. refocus the accountability system to reflect and support the expectation that all young people should remain in education and training until the age of 18;
 - g. restore the morale of the teaching profession by tackling poor employment practices, including workload, securing professional entitlements and respect for teachers, and refocusing the efforts of teachers and headteachers on their core responsibilities for teaching and leading teaching and learning;
 - h. establish a Masters-level profession and raise the pay of teachers in recognition of the increased knowledge and skills that they bring to the job; and
 - i. ensure access to high-quality professional development for all teachers throughout their careers.¹
4. It is clear that in many respects, the current curriculum framework does not meet these important tests. For this reason, the NASUWT supported the Welsh Government's decision to commission a fundamental review of curriculum and assessment arrangements.
5. In general, the report of the review of the curriculum undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson, *Successful Futures*, set out a coherent and rational basis for the future development of the curriculum framework in Wales.
6. However, in a range of critical respects, the proposals for the curriculum published by the Welsh Government have failed to reflect many of the key principles articulated in *Successful Futures*.
7. In particular, the recommendation that the curriculum should be developed by the workforce, for the workforce, has not been given practical effect. The exclusion of the voice of the profession has resulted

¹ NASUWT (2013). *Maintaining world class schools*. NASUWT; Birmingham.

in a proposed curriculum model that would, if implemented, generate significant workload burdens for teachers and undermine the ability of schools to secure for all children and young people their entitlement to a broad and balanced range of learning experiences.

8. The NASUWT continues to have profound concerns about current proposals for curricula reform. These concerns relate to critical aspects of the structure and content of the curriculum; its implications for the qualifications system and assessment practice; and the intention to proceed with implementation of the curriculum without a coherent evaluation of its workforce and resource requirements.
9. The NASUWT considers that the current health crisis and the recovery phase that will be necessary is the wrong time to initiate wholesale changes to, not only, the curriculum but also the accountability and assessment framework aligned to it. Space is needed to allow teachers and schools to recover from this time of extreme stress. Progressing at this time could lead to irretrievable mistakes being made.
10. The Union has also called on the Welsh Government to delay the implementation of the new curriculum in the face of the disruption to schools and the education system, stemming from the health emergency owing to the pandemic of COVID-19.
11. Teachers and teaching will remain disrupted for the foreseeable future, and teachers and schools have learnt a whole new way of working online and have poured their efforts into secure blended learning opportunities for pupils. The NASUWT considers that it is entirely unreasonable to place additional burdens on teachers at this time
12. The Union remains clear that in these circumstances, it would not be appropriate to proceed with implementation of the proposed curriculum by the start of the academic year 2022/23.

13. The NASUWT is therefore pleased by the Education Minister's recent decision to postpone the planned roll out of the New Curriculum for Year 7s in September 2022. This was the right decision given that the teaching profession continues to operate at full capacity providing education in the midst of a global pandemic. The Union remains concerned however at the Welsh Government's decision to retain the 2022 roll-out date for primary schools and the decision to require the New Curriculum for Year 7 and 8 to be introduced simultaneously in 2023.
14. The NASUWT is also very concerned regarding the offer of greater "flexibility" to secondary schools in deciding for themselves whether to delay the introduction of the new curriculum. The Union maintains that this is much too vague and leaves too much to the determination of individual school leaders. We are concerned some schools will choose to plough on regardless of whether they are ready for these changes.
15. This is not helped by the decision to make schools which do choose to delay roll out the new curriculum to both years 7 and 8 next year.
16. A universal and unified approach by the Welsh Government would have helped avoid a rushed and disjointed patchwork approach to the new curriculum which risks jeopardising its success, pushing up workload and stress for teachers and sowing confusion for pupils and parents."

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

17. The following comments must be read in the context that the NASUWT continued concerns, set out above, regarding the delay in the implementation of the new curriculum and the associated assessment and accountability frameworks to allow for a period of sustained recovery from the crippling effects of the pandemic.
18. The NASUWT's response is informed directly by serving teacher and headteacher members and also by the work of its representative

committees and consultative structures, made up of practising teachers and school leaders working in the education system.

19. The draft Progression Code sets out the way a curriculum **must** make provision for all pupils and children. It is therefore crucial that the code is clear. This is especially important in Primary settings where practitioners tend not to be subject specialists. Some the language in the subject specific areas is obscure and esoteric.

Question 1: How useful are the principles of progression for education practitioners in designing and developing their curriculum? And how might they be improved?

16. Practitioners understand and are familiar with progression through Knowledge, Understanding and Skills. However, 'making connections' and 'increasing effectiveness' are new and require more detail and support.

17. It is notable that Mathematics and numeracy have set different principles or 'proficiencies'. This should be extended to all AoLE. There is an attempt in the Progression Code to require consistency where none exists.

Question 2: In terms of the overarching principles of progression, are these clear and accurate in setting out what it means for learners to progress in their learning, 3-16 across the whole curriculum?

18. In the principle of 'Making Connections' there is a danger in 'learning in more unfamiliar and challenging contexts' puts a burden on schools and practitioners to provide those 'unfamiliar and challenging contexts.' This requires organisation, time and money. There are serious workload implications here for practitioners. If the school does not provide these contexts then the requirement falls upon the learner which is implied in the code. This brings in disadvantage to pupils from more challenging social backgrounds. There are important social equality issues that are exposed in this principle.

19. The principle of 'Increasing effectiveness' seems to be the home of 'everything else'. Included in this principle is self-evaluation, self-regulation,

research skills and work experience. It is a disconnected collection of diverse skills that have been lumped together. In short there is too much in this one principle.

Question 3: In terms of the principles of progression specific to each area of learning and experience, are these clear and accurate in setting out what is unique and distinct about progression, 3-16 within each area?

20. This response has already stated that some of the AoLE progression points are obscure and esoteric. It is extremely important that there is more clarity here especially with regards to the final two principles.

21. It is also vital that a progression code gives realistic examples of what can be assessed. In some of the AoLE 'Making connections' points there are passages that could not be assessed for example:

Expressive arts: '...the growing ability to transfer existing skills and knowledge into new contexts...'

Humanities: '...learners will demonstrate greater ability to influence events by informed and responsible citizenship.'

Question 4: How well do the overarching principles specific to each area of learning and experience form a clear and coherent whole? Are the specific principles consistent with the overarching ones?

22. The overarching principles do not apply to Mathematics which somewhat undermines the goal of overarching principles. There is also a tendency in the AoLEs to create obscure and/or unattainable goals in 'Making connections' and 'Increasing effectiveness'. It is notable that Mathematics has avoided both of these.

Question 5: What further support could be provided to help practitioners develop their approach to progression and assessment as an integral part of their curriculum, in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales?

23. It is notable that what is implied in this question is the reality that the practitioner is going to have to effectively build the curriculum from scratch. The NASUWT has expressed its serious concerns over the workload involved in this. The draft Progression code gives little support to practitioners. Many practitioners will be concerned as to how they assess the principles in 'Making connections' and 'Increasing effectiveness'. A great deal more work needs to be done to give absolute clarity as to what are the expectations on practitioners in these principles and how assess can and should be conducted.

Question 6: No comment

Question 7: No comment



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