



curriculum for excellence building the curriculum 5  
a framework for assessment:  
understanding, applying and sharing standards in  
assessment for curriculum for excellence:  
quality assurance and moderation

- > SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS
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a framework for assessment:

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ISBN: 978-0-7559-9562-2

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS10371 (10/10)

Published by the Scottish Government, October 2010

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## Contents

<b>Supplementary Information</b>	2
<b>Understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation</b>	3
<b>Translating principles into practice</b>	4
<b>Annex 1: Understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation</b>	11
<b>Annex 2: Understanding, applying and sharing standards for assessment in Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation</b>	14



## Supplementary Information

In January 2010, *Building the Curriculum 5: a framework for assessment* (BtC5) was published. That document stated that a rigorous and systematic national approach to quality assurance and moderation would be developed with a range of support structures and processes at local and national level. This guidance provides information on the national approaches to quality assurance and moderation through understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for *Curriculum for Excellence* to ensure that local and national practices are aligned.

This document provides:

- > guidance on the support and structures being put in place at **national** level to ensure that understanding, applying and sharing standard approaches in assessment are fair, and consistent and
- > guidance and an illustration of effective approaches at **local** level drawn from examples of current practice.

Understanding, applying and sharing standards is the responsibility of all teaching staff and is a core element of learning and teaching practice. The guidance is intended to supplement and be read in conjunction with existing information within BtC5 as well as in the supplement on quality assurance and moderation published in January 2010. It is primarily focused on the broad general education stage 3 to 15 and builds on effective practice which is established in schools and authorities. Detailed guidance on the quality assurance of National Qualifications in the senior phase will be provided by Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) at a later point. Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), SQA, HMIE and the Scottish Government will work closely together to ensure consistency and coherence in approaches at all levels 3 to 18.



# Understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation

## the purposes of national and local approaches to understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment

*Building the Curriculum 5: a framework for assessment (BtC5)* outlines the principles of assessment and how quality assurance and moderation of assessment are firmly embedded in the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. BtC5 states that:

*“A national system for quality assurance and moderation for 3 to 18 will be developed to support teachers in achieving consistency and confidence in their professional judgements”; and “support structures have to be put in place so that local and national practices are fully aligned and everyone is clear about roles and responsibilities.”*

The **purposes** of quality assurance and moderation are to ensure consistency of understanding and application of standards at **national and local levels**, support trust and confidence in teacher<sup>1</sup> judgements and ensure progression and continuity of standards from 3 to 15. These approaches will provide assurance to parents and others that learners are receiving appropriate recognition for their achievements in line with agreed national standards and are progressing in line with teachers' expectations.

## Principles for understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment

*BtC5: quality assurance and moderation*, identifies the following key principles which should underpin local and national approaches to understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Approaches to quality assurance and moderation should:

1. provide the opportunity for teachers to **collaborate** and participate in professional dialogue and collegiate working
2. ensure that **learning, teaching and assessment** are planned in a **coherent** way and that assessment is valid and reliable
3. be **fit for purpose** and **proportionate** with processes articulating across stages and sectors
4. be **manageable** and the methods used accessible and easily arranged with ongoing professional dialogue as a key component and
5. promote **capacity building** of assessment expertise, professional learning and development and quality improvement as integral to quality assurance processes.

Schools<sup>2</sup>, education authorities and national bodies all have a role to play and key responsibilities in translating these principles into practice. They also need to ensure that quality assurance and moderation of assessment is fair and rigorous, and gives confidence in teachers' judgements.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'teacher' or 'staff' in this document is used to refer to all staff involved in assessment and includes pre-school practitioners, college lecturers, CLD staff and other relevant practitioners

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper, the term 'school' is taken to include pre-school centres, residential and day special schools (including secure provision), and primary and secondary schools.

## Translating principles into practice

### Local support

In developing approaches to quality assurance and moderation staff will need to ensure that they reflect upon the principles of understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment. This applies whether staff are in a school/local authority or other centre. Annex 1 provides an extract from *BtC 5 : a framework for assessment* (pages 50-52) detailing a list of the roles and responsibilities of learners, teachers and practitioners, curriculum planners and managers and education authorities.

The following sections set out ways in which the principles could be put into practice for practitioners, schools and local authorities.

### Practitioners

Quality assurance and moderation is an intrinsic element of all teaching staff's practice. In translating these principles into practice, staff need to work in a **collegiate** way. This will include discussing and agreeing the best approaches for quality assurance and moderation, building on existing good practice, including monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement. Staff must also ensure that these approaches provide the right balance between effort and sustainability and are appropriate to the ages and stages of learners.

To develop and reach a shared understanding of national standards and expectations all practitioners have a professional responsibility to develop their own knowledge and skills, and to participate in moderation activities. These activities should include:

- > working with colleagues to quality assure planned approaches to learning, teaching and assessment and
- > sampling and checking learners' work to ensure consistency in applying standards

Staff with delegated responsibility for the leadership of specific curriculum areas should also participate in moderation activities at authority level and, where possible, across authorities and at national level.

Participation in a wide range of moderation approaches will support teaching staff in agreeing quality and standards for the broad general education.

Examples of effective practice already taking place include:

- > early years staff meeting regularly to view a range of evidence and plan experiences to help children learn through play. By observing and talking regularly to children about their learning and development, early years staff identify with each individual child what they should learn next and how
- > stage partners in a primary school planning and reviewing progress in learning together



- > staff in secondary school departments coming together to plan the learning, teaching and assessment for specific programmes of work, agreeing marking schemes and sampling and cross marking examples of learners' work
- > within the college sector, staff from a range of subject areas regularly coming together to plan programmes tailored to the needs of individual students and to discuss and agree evidence of standards achieved.

Annex 2, a further extract from *BtC5 a framework for assessment: quality assurance and moderation* (pages 6 to 7) provides further examples of work taking place to develop and reach a shared understanding of national standards and expectations.

## Schools

Schools should have in place approaches to understanding, applying and sharing standards, which focus on improvement. These approaches should build upon the most effective current practices. These include:

- > establishing and maintaining forums for effective dialogue and
- > regular scheduled meetings for staff working at the same stage and in the same subject/curriculum area, for example principal teacher groups and cluster working groups.

In their *Standard and Quality* reports, schools report on self-evaluation and improvements in practices which have led to improved outcomes for learners. This report should also include comments on the effectiveness of arrangements for quality assurance and moderation and provide confirmation that staff are following local and national guidance on assessment.

To help develop a shared understanding of national standards, schools should have arrangements in place to ensure effective dialogue is taking place within stages/departments/faculties across the school and in cluster networks. This is of particular importance at points of transition. Schools should involve partners in delivering learning outcomes in their planning and moderation activities, for example partners from the college sector, Community Learning and Development and the voluntary sector.

Quality assurance approaches by senior managers, faculty heads and principal teachers should include participation in learning visits, sampling learners' work, and follow-up professional dialogue with staff about learners' progress, standards and expectations.

## Education authorities

Education authorities should ensure effective dialogue across schools, and throughout the authority to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations. Developing strong partnerships with other authorities can also support the development of these approaches. Education authorities should provide opportunities for staff to collaborate in moderation activities at authority level, cross-authority level and national level. Approaches to quality assurance should include moderation arrangements, in order to “provide assurance that schools in their area are consistently applying





*national standards and expectations” (BtC5: a framework for assessment, page 8) and to secure improvement.*

Education authorities are already developing and implementing effective approaches to understanding, applying and sharing standards of assessment, building on existing structures and good practice within schools and in schools authority-wide. These will be aligned with national approaches and structures.

The most effective practices taking place at present include:

- > education authority staff organising and facilitating professional dialogue within and across sectors
- > identifying good practice and providing opportunities to share practice and expectations
- > visits to schools to validate the accuracy of self-evaluation evidence and
- > sampling the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment

The following are early examples of how education authorities are putting principles into practice. National partners will identify and share further examples of effective practice in quality assurance and moderation approaches as these emerge from schools and education authorities.

#### **Cluster approach to understanding, applying and sharing standards of assessment**

*Many authorities developed models for the moderation of assessment of “writing” at 5 to 14 levels and are now planning to use aspects of these models across the curriculum. For example, one authority has developed a four-staged approach. This ranges from small groups of staff in schools up to groups at authority level with moderation teams of practitioners in every curricular area sampling and checking the application of standards.*

**Stage one** places an important emphasis on prior quality assurance and moderation linked to planning learning, teaching and assessment.

**Stage two** involves quality assurance approaches at whole school level.

At **stage three** there is a strong emphasis on collaborative working within the wider learning community focusing particularly on key transition stages.

**Stage four** involves moderation teams at authority level as outlined above. This model is working alongside the education authority’s approaches for CPD.

#### **Building on existing staffing structures**

*Many authorities already have in place designated subject/curricular leads. Many have seconded staff to lead on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the authority working with key staff at school level in these areas. Others have in place groups of practitioners who have been given additional time to provide a lead in specific curriculum areas across the authority in both the primary and the secondary sector. These curriculum leads, with authority support, will organise/facilitate moderation activities at cluster and authority level. They will also participate in national moderation activities.*



### Designated subject curricular leads

*In some authorities each primary and special school are nominating a person with lead responsibility for assessment and moderation who will provide support and ensure that all staff are participating in moderation activities. They will facilitate planning and moderation activities within clusters, identifying appropriate staff to participate. Each secondary school will have a lead person for literacy and numeracy and each curriculum area. They will provide support and ensure that all staff are participating in appropriate moderation activities. Staff from partner organisations, for example from CLD and colleges, will be expected to participate as appropriate. Cover costs will be provided by the education authority to release staff in primary, secondary and special schools to participate in additional moderation activities at cluster, authority, cross authority and where possible national moderation activities.*

## National support

The following sections outline the range of national support structures that will be in place to support understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment.

National support will include:

- > establishing a team of National Co-ordinators in quality assurance and moderation to **support and facilitate** the development of national consistency in the application of standards across the country in relation to the broad general education 3 to 15
- > developing the National Assessment Resource (NAR) to provide exemplification of national standards and expectations and help practitioners to develop their professional skills in assessment
- > enhancing the role of national bodies to support education authorities, schools, colleges and other centres
- > providing more opportunities for collaboration between education authorities, schools, colleges and other centres. These will take place both electronically (for example, through the NAR, Glow, LTS on-line services and SQA Academy) and face-to-face (for example, through national network groups and professional development workshops)

In addition, in March 2010 funding of £3 million for local authorities was agreed by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to support quality assurance and moderation practices within schools and authorities to ensure consistency of standards.

## National Co-ordinators in quality assurance and moderation

The team of National Co-ordinators in quality assurance and moderation, managed by LTS, will have responsibility for supporting and facilitating the development of national consistency in the application of standards across the country in relation to the broad general education 3 to 15. They will work in partnership with other colleagues in LTS, SQA, HMIE, Scottish Government and other national partners to share information and support work in capacity building. They will also contribute to the quality assurance of items/exemplars in the NAR and encourage and support teaching staff to populate it. On an annual basis, they will provide feedback to education authorities and report on progress on consistency in applying national standards in their curricular areas of responsibility.

## National Assessment Resource

The NAR is a major new technological development for Scottish education. The NAR will provide exemplification of national standards and expectations and help practitioners to develop their professional skills in assessment. The NAR will:

*“..provide a single place in which assessment materials for Curriculum for Excellence can be stored. This includes assessment material developed by SQA, LTS and teachers. It will include examples of practice which illustrate standards and expectations across curriculum areas, stages, experiences and outcomes and qualifications. This will support teachers in developing a shared understanding of standards and expectations and how to apply these consistently..”*  
(BtC5 a framework for assessment page 41).

The NAR will enable practitioners to create, share and find a wide range of assessment resources. This will include video, audio and interactive resources as well as text. For example, practitioners will be able to create assessments incorporating questions (e.g. free text or multiple-choice), graphics and digital media. This will enable practitioners to use a broad range of assessment techniques to gather evidence on learners' progress and achievements.

LTS and SQA are working closely with education authorities and centres to develop content for the NAR. Materials are being produced for literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across curriculum areas. Subsequent work will provide resources for curriculum areas. Future developments will support National Qualifications. The production and sharing of resources by practitioners themselves will be key to the success of the NAR.

This collegiate approach is also being applied to the processes for quality assuring content for the NAR. An important element of this process will be the peer review of resources by practitioners. This will help to promote wider understanding of national standards and expectations, and ensure that these are applied consistently.

## The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN)

The SSLN will support assessment approaches for Curriculum for Excellence by monitoring national standards of performance in literacy and numeracy over time at P4, P7 and S2. This information will also support schools and education authorities by providing information about national standards and trends in achievement, identifying strengths and informing improvements in learning, teaching and assessment. Information from international surveys will also inform Scottish Government about standards and trends in achievement.

## Enhancing the role of national bodies

National bodies are already working in partnership to support the development and implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This will continue to be an important part of the implementation of national approaches for understanding, applying and sharing standards of assessment in *Curriculum for Excellence*.



## Learning and Teaching Scotland

As part of its role in raising standards for all at a national level, LTS will continue to provide advice, support and CPD relating to quality assurance and moderation in the broad general education 3 to 15. This support will be under-pinned by rigorous approaches giving confidence in teachers' judgements. A key aspect of this role will be leading and facilitating professional development, including support for the development and delivery of the NAR.

The National Co-ordinators in quality assurance and moderation will play a key role in taking forward LTS's remit in relation to quality assurance and moderation. A feature of this work will be liaison with colleagues in SQA who have responsibility for the assessment, quality assurance and moderation of National Qualifications in the senior phase. This partnership working will be important to ensure a coherent and systematic approach that will deliver quality assurance practices which are fully aligned and articulate across stages and sectors, 3 to 18.

LTS will also continue to work in partnership with SQA, Scottish Government and HMIE on the development of the SSLN.

## Scottish Qualifications Authority

In the broad general education 3 to 15, SQA will work in partnership with Scottish Government, HMIE and LTS to support schools, colleges and education authorities in developing and maintaining quality assurance and moderation systems. This will involve:

- > supporting the development and delivery of the NAR and
- > developing quality assured assessments and exemplification for the NAR to promote the understanding and application of national standards in assessment and achievement 3 to 15

Additionally, SQA will continue to work in partnership with Scottish Government, HMIE and LTS on the SSLN with a lead role in the development, delivery and quality assurance of SSLN assessments.

In the senior phase, in addition to their core remit of developing, accrediting and quality assuring qualifications and assessments, SQA will continue to provide external quality assurance for National Qualifications. This will ensure high quality and national consistency in internal and external assessment practice, and assessment judgements. An important aspect of this work will be the provision of a range of resources for teachers, lecturers and education authorities in relation to the development of assessments, the understanding and application of national standards for qualifications. Resources will include CPD, guidance and exemplification in relation to the assessment and quality assurance of National Qualifications. This will be provided in a range of ways including the understanding standards website, SQA Academy courses, professional development workshops, other support activities, exemplification of assessments through the NAR and annual internal and external assessment reports.

SQA will also support schools, colleges and education authorities in developing sustainable quality assurance processes appropriate for the senior phase. There will be close liaison between SQA, LTS and Scotland's Colleges to ensure coherence and consistency in quality assurance practices across



all stages 3 to 18 and beyond. This will ensure that national standards for qualifications are maintained in a manageable way. Through monitoring and supporting quality assurance processes used in the context of qualifications, SQA will identify and disseminate good practice at local, regional and national levels. This will build confidence in assessment judgements and capacity within the system, and inform improvements in assessment and quality assurance practices. Resources will include CPD and guidance on assessment, development of assessment and quality assurance of assessment, support around understanding standards and feedback from SQA on application of standards.

## HMIE

As part of inspections, HMIE will evaluate the effectiveness of improvements through self-evaluation and will include reviewing the arrangements for moderation as a routine part of the school inspections it undertakes. HMIE will evaluate the effectiveness of local and national moderation in developing a shared understanding of standards and expectations within the school. Through the inspection process and other related activities, HMIE will continue to build capacity within the system by engaging in professional dialogue with practitioners and identifying and sharing good practice. This will support, promote and extend the quality and rigour of the moderation process and ensure regular national coverage.

## Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is committed to all aspects of work related to *Curriculum for Excellence* and plays an important role in national initiatives which support quality assurance and moderation of assessment including provision of the NAR and the SSLN which is aligned with *Curriculum for Excellence*.



## ANNEX 1

### Understanding, applying and sharing standards in assessment for Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation

#### Roles and responsibilities in assessment

The *Roles and responsibilities* of individuals, groups and organisations in assessment are indicated below. These are not comprehensive or definitive lists of *Roles and responsibilities*.

#### Learners

- > engage actively in learning
- > are assessed as part of daily learning through a range of activities including dialogue and interactions with peers and teachers, practical investigations, performances, oral presentations and discussions
- > are assessed on written work and on products such as artwork, reports or projects
- > demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, skills, attributes and capabilities through a wide range of evidence including specific assessment tasks, activities, tests and examinations
- > shape and review their learning by reflection, setting learning goals and next steps including through personal learning planning
- > review their own learning through self assessment
- > collaborate in peer assessment
- > contribute to moderation activities

#### Teachers and other practitioners

- > work collaboratively to develop approaches to monitoring, self-evaluation and improvement planning
- > engage regularly in collegiate working including by participating in local and national networking activities
- > work with colleagues to develop a shared understanding of standards and expectations through moderation activities which involve coherent planning, checking, sampling, reviewing and providing feedback for improvement
- > ensure that assessment always supports learning and is based on a wide range of evidence which is reliably judged against national standards and expectations and promotes progression, breadth and depth in learning
- > plan, design and carry out assessment as an ongoing part of learning and teaching and periodically use specific assessments, tests or examinations as appropriate
- > involve learners fully in assessment and help them to understand what is expected
- > develop learners' roles in moderation activities



- > evaluate evidence of learning to contribute to profiles and report on learners' achievements and progress
- > participate in quality assurance, moderation and CPD activities, using materials available, to develop assessment expertise and to ensure assessment practices are valid and reliable
- > contribute to and take ownership of the National Assessment Resource

### **Curriculum planners and managers in pre-school, school, community, college and other settings (including headteachers, depute headteachers, faculty heads/principal teachers, curriculum leaders and service managers)**

- > provide opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in planning the curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment in a coherent way to achieve breadth, challenge and application of learning
- > provide opportunities for staff to discuss, share and develop an understanding of standards and expectations through participating in moderation and CPD in assessment and contributing to the National Assessment Resource
- > ensure that quality assurance and moderation activities are fit for purpose, proportionate, manageable and accessible
- > ensure an appropriate focus on coherent planning, checking, sampling, reviewing and providing feedback for improvement
- > ensure that appropriate monitoring and tracking of learners' progress is in place so that assessment information is used to support learning and involve learners in target setting
- > use *Curriculum for Excellence* guidance in self-evaluation and ensure it is reflected as a key priority in all improvement plans
- > ensure that self-evaluation is based on a wide range of evidence across all aspects of learning including benchmarking information to inform improvement planning and raising achievement for all learners
- > provide an open and transparent account of how successful children and young people are in their learning and of the establishment's areas for improvement:
  - based upon self-evaluation, including consideration of the nature, population and context of the school or college
  - containing a range of information on learners' progress and performance, a narrative about how well the establishment is performing and a description of how it intends to improve the achievement of its learners

### **Education authorities**

- > have a responsibility to secure improvement in the quality of school education and to ensure appropriate standards in education
- > support self-evaluation and improvement processes
- > sample the quality and consistency of learning, teaching, assessment and achievement in schools within the authority



- > ensure that schools have suitable arrangements in place to support teachers' judgements and focus on any action required for improvement
- > facilitate local networks and contribute to identifying the focus of moderation and verification activities to ensure fitness for purpose and proportionality, this will include ensuring an appropriate focus on moderation across transitions and involving partners across sectors
- > facilitate developing effective collaboration across education authorities and partners and linking local practices with those at a national level
- > provide assurance that schools in their area are consistently applying national standards and expectations and that they are participating in both local and national quality assurance and moderation activities and using these processes thoroughly
- > will have moderated, nationally benchmarked information about the performance of learners to assist them in meeting their statutory responsibilities including to secure improvement
- > ensure that assessment information is used appropriately to encourage and challenge school staff to reflect on the links between classroom practice and outcomes for children and young people in order to inform planning for improvement
- > have a continuous professional development plan in place to support *Curriculum for Excellence* implementation: the plan should identify the priorities for staff development within establishments; partnerships among establishments and among specific staffing groups, for example, headteachers, college principals, literacy specialists, peripatetic staff or teaching assistants
- > support non-local authority early years providers to understand the expectations of local authorities in relation to staff development
- > where HMIE make recommendations for improvements in quality assurance and moderation, education authorities will support and challenge schools to ensure appropriate follow-through activities focus on the required improvements





## ANNEX 2

### Understanding, applying and sharing standards for assessment in Curriculum for Excellence: quality assurance and moderation

#### Current approaches to quality assurance and moderation of assessment in the education sector

Pre-school centres, schools, colleges and education authorities currently have a range of effective practices that contribute to ensuring consistency and a shared understanding and application of standards and expectations. The following are examples of current practice although these are not yet used consistently.

Pre-school centres, primary, special and secondary schools:

- > Through focused learning visits to classes, staff evaluate learning and engage in professional dialogue about children's progress, thereby ensuring consistently high standards
- > Senior staff, for example headteachers, depute headteachers, principal teachers and faculty heads sample learners' work. Follow-up professional dialogue focuses on expectations, strengths of learners' performance, quality of feedback and agreeing next steps in learning
- > Individual teachers adopt strategies to avoid pre-judging outcomes, for example marking learners' work without being provided with names
- > Teachers, when teaching children at the same stage, share the same preparation time to allow collaborative planning, peer review and discussion of standards and expectations
- > Departmental meetings regularly include planning learning, teaching and assessment together in a coherent way. Staff are able to share effective strategies which they know have improved learning and achievement
- > Standards and expectations are shared through displaying learners' work aligned to levels to show progression, for example in writing displayed on a 'learning wall'
- > Professional dialogue focuses on examples of learners' work that has been pre-marked to help reach an agreed view on quality and standards and to identify next steps in learning, particularly at points of transition
- > Staff use benchmark data of similar schools to compare their learners' achievements to that of others
- > Staff engage children and young people in discussions about progress and target-setting as part of planning to meet their learning needs

In secondary departments (in addition to the activities listed above):

- > Teachers cross-mark end of topic tests, unit assessments and prelims by marking pupils' work in other classes or groups and engage in professional dialogue about the results



- > Assessment materials, marking schemes and marking records are developed and agreed across the department with faculty heads/principal teachers sampling learners' work and checking consistency of marking
- > Teachers use a range of resources provided by SQA to help understanding of the national standards, for example, the Understanding Standards website, SQA Academy, professional development workshops, Quality Networks, Marking Instructions, Principal Assessors and External Verifier reports
- > Secondary teachers are appointed as for example, Principal Assessors, Setters, Verifiers, Examiners and Markers by SQA to support the development and delivery of National Qualifications and share their expertise in their school and education authority
- > Learning outcomes are used to set short- and long-term targets

#### Education authorities:

- > Staff carry out verification visits to validate accuracy of schools' self-evaluation evidence and sample quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment
- > Staff collate and analyse a range of local and national data, including STACs information. This is used as the basis of discussion with headteachers, deputies and faculty heads/principal teachers to inform planning for improvement in learners' achievements
- > Staff identify good practice and organise good practice events for staff across schools within the authority to share expectations and practice
- > Staff facilitate cross-sectoral professional dialogue to share practice. For example, 'Experiences and Outcomes Teams' with staff from different pre-school, primary, special and secondary schools plan learning, teaching and assessment to ensure progression

#### Colleges:

- > Further education colleges already have well-established systems of quality assurance and moderation of assessment linked to qualifications and awards that they offer
- > Staff use these processes to achieve consistency and reliability with a high degree of autonomy, for example working to college and SQA arrangements
- > Quality assurance and moderation approaches are developed in line with college policies and designed to ensure consistency of judgements
- > Internal moderation procedures involve approaches such as sampling evidence of learning and cross-checking assessments within and across departments

All these working practices across education authorities, schools and colleges form a strong basis for developing quality assurance and moderation arrangements for the future.



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Email: [scottishgovernment@booksource.net](mailto:scottishgovernment@booksource.net)

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS10371 (10/10)

ISBN: 978-0-7559-9562-2



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