

# REPORT ON THE ASPECT REVIEW OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

**Preparation within initial teacher education for *Curriculum for Excellence*:**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 This Review

1.1.1 Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>1</sup> is different in scale, scope and approach from any previous Scottish educational development. The Curriculum Review Group publication of 2004, entitled *A Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>2</sup>, set out a series of values, purposes and principles which were to underpin the new 3-18 curriculum. The Review Group found that 'a significant proportion of young people in Scotland are not achieving what they are capable of'. Further, it identified the need for a curriculum which would enable young people to understand the world they live in, reach the highest possible levels of achievement, and equip them for work and learning throughout their lives. The document set out the intention that the new curriculum:

- *should enable all young people to benefit from their education, supporting them in different ways to achieve their potential;*
- *must value the learning and achievements of all young people and promote high aspirations and ambition;*
- *should emphasise the rights and responsibilities of individuals and nations. It should help young people to understand diverse cultures and beliefs and support them in developing concern, tolerance, care and respect for themselves and others;*
- *should enable teachers to work in partnership more effectively with other professions and services to help meet children's needs in the round;*
- *must enable young people to build up a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding and promote a commitment to considered judgement and ethical action; and*
- *should give young people the confidence, attributes and capabilities to make valuable contributions to society.*

1.1.2 The implications for the education of teachers who are to ensure the highest possible levels of achievement for each young person are spelled out and include:

- *clarity about what education is seeking to achieve for each child; flexibility to apply professional judgement in planning programmes and activities to respond to the needs of individual children; a curriculum which is not overcrowded because of too much content; more teaching across and beyond traditional subject boundaries; time and space for innovative and creative teaching and learning;*

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<sup>1</sup> [www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/](http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/11/20178/45862>

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and, for the system as a whole

- *a responsibility to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are directed to achieving the purposes and principles set out here and that qualifications reflect this fully; a responsibility to ensure that initial training and continuing professional development of teachers and educators equip them fully for their task; and a commitment to a continuing programme of refreshment and review of the curriculum.*

**1.1.3** The publication of a series of guidance documents began in autumn 2006. Following consultation and engagement with teachers and practitioners, the final Experiences and Outcomes were published in April 2009. The series of documents entitled *Building the Curriculum* are helping teachers across the country shape the curriculum to match it closely to the needs of young people. *Building the Curriculum 5* was published in May 2010 and offers further guidance in developing a comprehensive, progressive approach to curriculum and assessment suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**1.1.4** Teachers in schools and centres are engaging actively with *Curriculum for Excellence*. They are reviewing their curriculum as a whole in relation to the values and principles, familiarising themselves with ideas and guidance and using the Experiences and Outcomes increasingly in planning young people's learning. Further work is ongoing to review current programmes and learning and teaching approaches against the aspirations of *Curriculum for Excellence*. HMIE has been reporting to the *Curriculum for Excellence* Management Board on progress.

**1.1.5** A key tenet of *Curriculum for Excellence* is that all teachers are expected to take responsibility for developing children's skills in literacy, numeracy and aspects of health and wellbeing. The reasons for the inclusion of health and wellbeing alongside literacy and numeracy as the responsibility of all teachers are laid out in one of the earliest documents concerning *Curriculum for Excellence*, *Building the Curriculum 1*:

*Learning through health and wellbeing promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. Because of this, it is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and development in this area.*

*Learning in health and wellbeing ensures that children and young people develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes which they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.*

Teachers therefore are now expected to identify, reinforce and extend opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. They will use these at an appropriate level to meet the learning needs of their children and young people, through all curriculum and subject areas. Universities are required to prepare all new teachers for these, and the other, new challenges.

**1.1.6** *Curriculum for Excellence* sets very high expectations of cognitive demand and rigour within subjects, and aims to raise the attainment of children and young people

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overall. In order to address these aims, teachers need to have a high level of expert knowledge as well as the pedagogical skills necessary to teach and stimulate learning within this new environment. These pedagogical approaches are being further developed in schools and centres across the country to address a view of the curriculum which focuses on the needs and aspirations of each child.

**1.1.7** An important feature of *Curriculum for Excellence* is the emphasis on improvement of achievement through well-planned interdisciplinary learning. This term describes learning which:

- helps raise young people's attainment and achievement by bringing together learning through different areas of the curriculum by providing opportunities for learning in depth and the extension and consolidation of skills;
- provides opportunities for interest-based learning, making learning more relevant to young people's lives;
- focuses on agreed, challenging learning outcomes for young people; and
- ensures progression in skills, knowledge and understanding.

**1.1.8** Traditionally, primary schools' topic work has provided a strong foundation for interdisciplinary learning though the extent to which it achieved progression in learning varied. Owing to the structure and nature of the secondary school timetable, this has not been a strong feature in secondary schools. Teachers will now need to develop this aspect of their work as they work towards providing a broad general education for each child or young person.

**1.1.9** The model of initial teacher education (ITE) which operates in Scotland was recognised in the Second Stage Review of Initial Teacher Education<sup>3</sup> as a continuum of development from university into the probation year and beyond. Teachers emerging from university, having achieved the Standard for Initial Teacher Registration, are able to function as effective teachers but have a range of development needs. These will need to be addressed as they work towards the Standard for Full Registration<sup>4</sup> and beyond that as they develop all of the problem-solving skills shown by teachers with a number of years of experience. Expectations at any point in the continuum must be realistic and achievable.

**1.1.10** Universities are preparing student teachers to take their places in the profession within this dynamic and evolving context. In March 2008, Fiona Hyslop, the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong learning, speaking in the Scottish Parliament<sup>5</sup>, indicated that she had been asking the Deans<sup>6</sup> of education faculties

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<sup>3</sup> Review of Initial Teacher Education Stage 2 and Ministerial response: May 2005  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Teaching/ITEstage2>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.gtcs.org.uk/Publications/StandardsandRegulations/The\\_Standard\\_for\\_Full\\_Registration.aspx](http://www.gtcs.org.uk/Publications/StandardsandRegulations/The_Standard_for_Full_Registration.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Col 7059 in <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialreports/meetingsParliament/or-08/sor0319-02.htm>

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whether the current initial teacher education curriculum met the needs identified in *Curriculum for Excellence*. They had given her confidence and an assurance that *Curriculum for Excellence* would be embedded in the work of all teachers who would be educated at Scottish universities over the next five years.

**1.1.11** Speaking at a teacher education conference in June 2008, Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Young People, announced an HMIE aspect review in the following terms:

*Clearly we will look to the universities to ensure that they are making as full a contribution as possible to the successful implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. I know that you have already turned your minds to this, and one of the benefits of events like this is that it affords opportunities to share thinking on such matters. It is crucial that we make the best possible use of all the best ideas, and that is why we will be asking HMIE to undertake an aspect review into how, and how well, the teacher education universities are preparing new teachers to deliver Curriculum for Excellence.*

He indicated that this would be a two-year piece of work, culminating in a report to Ministers in the summer of 2010.

### **1.2 Objectives**

**1.2.1** Following discussion with universities and policy officials, HMIE agreed the main objectives of the first year of the review leading to an interim report. Given that *Curriculum for Excellence* would still be evolving and guidance materials would be published over the year, the interim report would not aim to provide definite evaluations or recommendations. Rather, it would provide preliminary evaluations of:

- the dispositions of university staff and students towards the philosophy underpinning *Curriculum for Excellence* and approaches to implementing it; and
- the preparedness of student teachers to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*, in particular, their preparedness to teach literacy and numeracy.

**1.2.2** The final version of the new curriculum guidelines was published in 2009, during year two of the Aspect Review. By this time, universities and schools were moving from a phase of familiarisation with the values and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* towards increasing use of the Experiences and Outcomes as tools for planning and ensuring rich and varied learning experiences for young people.

**1.2.3** Owing to the range and scope of *Curriculum for Excellence*, schools and universities have had to prioritise areas for development. The identification of literacy and numeracy as the responsibility of all teachers has entailed a change in emphasis and sometimes too in teaching approaches required. Universities have had to prioritise development in these areas.

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<sup>6</sup> Deans: the leaders of the seven providers of initial teacher education in Scotland have various titles. The term 'Dean' is used for ease of reference.

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**1.2.4** *Curriculum for Excellence* highlighted one further area, health and wellbeing, as the responsibility of all teachers.

**1.2.5** By the second year of the Aspect Review, therefore, universities were concentrating their energies primarily on familiarising staff and students with the Experience and Outcomes, and in particular developing a deeper understanding of those pertaining to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. During the initial discussions regarding the Aspect Review, the HMIE team and the university Deans had recognised that further objectives would be added as the Aspect Review continued into session 2009/10 and as staff became more familiar with the challenges and opportunities offered by *Curriculum for Excellence*. The renewed emphasis on a 3-18 curriculum and the need to build appropriately on young people's prior learning indicated that continuity of learning should become an area for review. Following discussion with the universities, continuity of learning across transitions and health and wellbeing were added to the remit of the Aspect Review.

### **1.3 Context**

**1.3.1** Teacher education in Scotland takes place in well-established faculties, institutes, or schools within Scottish universities. These offer a range of degrees leading to a teaching qualification, the principal of which are the four-year BEd (primary or secondary), BA, BSc or MA, and the one-year PGDE courses. The majority of teachers follow the BEd or PGDE route, while a minority follow joint degree courses with other subjects, leading to a degree which includes a teaching qualification.

**1.3.2** Universities are continually developing the research profile of their departments and staff alongside teaching programmes. Universities are increasingly fostering the ability of students to engage with research and develop their capability to take forward action research projects during their work.

**1.3.3** In consequence, the role of the teacher educator has been changing. There is an increasing focus on academic research alongside knowledge of curricular content and developing practical teaching skills. The shift in balance towards research has implications for the range and balance of teachers' skills in the early stages of their careers. *Curriculum for Excellence* relies on teachers having expert curricular knowledge and teaching skills while also being able to reflect productively on their practice. Many university staff articulate some tensions between research demands on them and the time available to them to work with students. Many value their role in supporting the pedagogical development of students in preparing them to work within *Curriculum for Excellence* in schools, at least as much as developing their engagement with research. Teacher educators must strike a balance between preparing students for the specific demands of their day-to-day role in schools and equipping them to be adaptable, reflective practitioners. Not all university staff feel that this balance has been struck effectively.



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**1.3.4** The teacher education sector has undergone a period of significant challenge and change over the last two years, a state of affairs which is continuing and even accelerating. Key staff have changed. Many faculties and departments have been subject to restructuring and reduction. The differing circumstances prevailing in each university have affected the pace and direction of its development of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**1.3.5** Scottish schools have been in a period of curriculum transition during sessions 2008/09 and 2009/10. Not surprisingly, many students on placement find that staff in schools are familiarising themselves with the Experiences and Outcomes whilst continuing to use some 5-14 strands and levels. University staff have been alerting students to this period of transition and overlap between the 5-14 curriculum and *Curriculum for Excellence*.

### **1.4. Methodology**

**1.4.1** The first phase of this Aspect Review took place in session 2008/09. Each university nominated two members of staff to work as associate assessors with HM Inspectors to carry out fieldwork. This joint working was aimed at the promotion of partnership and cross-fertilisation among universities and HMIE, and building evaluation capacity across the higher education system. Each university was visited twice by a team of HM Inspectors and associate assessors in the course of the session.

**1.4.2** The fieldwork covered established aspects of programmes that aligned with the guidance on *Curriculum for Excellence* as well as adjustments and additions to programmes that were prompted specifically by it.

**1.4.3** Staff at each university were asked to identify to the review team areas of their practice in relation to *Curriculum for Excellence* that they would describe as interesting or innovative.

**1.4.4** Team members scrutinised relevant documentation and engaged with ongoing university activities where feasible and appropriate. They interviewed groups of primary and secondary BA, BSc, BEd and PGDE and students from various year groups and asked them to reflect on their understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* and their preparedness to play their part in it. In each of the universities, members of the review team interviewed the Deans of faculties of education/heads of schools of education or their representatives, as well as a number of course directors and tutors.

**1.4.5** The second phase of the Aspect Review took place in session 2009/10. Questionnaires<sup>7</sup> were issued to all newly qualified teachers (NQTs), and to their headteachers. A total of 507 responses, representing a 16% return, were received from NQTs and 358 responses, representing a 24% return from headteachers. These responses were analysed and collated.

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<sup>7</sup> These can be viewed at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

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**1.4.6** Staffing changes in most universities meant that a number of the associate assessors involved in the first year were no longer available to work on year 2 of the Aspect Review. This led to an agreement between HMIE and universities that further fieldwork, involving visits to education authorities and to universities, would be carried out by a team drawn from only HMIE.

**1.4.7** The HMIE team visited eight education authorities. They held discussions with groups of NQTs (primary and secondary), headteachers and local education authority (EA) personnel who had responsibility for supporting NQTs. Agendas<sup>8</sup> were broad, based on the Aspect Review themes, and shared with staff and NQTs prior to the visit. Interviewees were invited to develop any themes they raised. The review team did not observe NQTs teaching.

**1.4.8** In the final phase of the Aspect Review, universities were invited to submit a self-evaluation statement outlining their view of their progress in developing *Curriculum for Excellence*. Six universities did so. The team then visited all seven universities to interview Deans and staff, and groups of students from a range of degree and postgraduate courses. Broad agendas based on a common core set of questions, customised to reflect the self-evaluation statements from each university, were used to shape discussions. The focus was on the university's progress in embedding *Curriculum for Excellence* since the previous HMIE visit. These broad agendas were shared in advance with staff and students. Interviewees were invited to pursue and develop any themes they raised to illustrate the progress made. HMIE held structured discussions, based on the university's self-evaluation statement, with the Dean or representative, staff and groups of students. In this way, the review team was able to tailor interview agendas to suit the very diverse contexts of each university, while retaining a clear focus clearly on how, and how well, the university is preparing new teachers to deliver *Curriculum for Excellence*.

## **2. How, and how well are universities preparing student teachers to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*?**

### **2.1. The first year of the Aspect Review**

**2.1.1** The first year of fieldwork for this Aspect Review indicated that universities overall made significant progress in a number of areas since the publication of the *HMIE Scoping Review of Initial Teacher Education*<sup>9</sup>. This Scoping Review endorses the vision for teachers as '*reflective practitioners*', i.e. highly aware professionals who possess strong abilities relating to curriculum and pedagogy but who are also able to see the big picture and contribute to continuous improvement. Evidence from this Aspect Review indicates that universities are successful in developing teachers with the identified qualities - open, enquiring minds and knowledge of research - characteristics

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<sup>8</sup> These can be viewed at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk)

<sup>9</sup> Evolution or Revolution? HMIE SCOPING REVIEW OF INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION 2002. <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/Publications.aspx>

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that will be needed to teach effectively in the environment of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The evidence provided by headteachers indicates that students are emerging from universities with a very positive, enthusiastic attitude towards developing the curriculum and using a wide range of teaching approaches appropriately to meet the needs of all learners. They have been taught the importance of reflecting continuously on their practice and adapting it appropriately to extend pupils' learning and achievement. Self-evaluation has been a key feature of their work at university in this respect. Almost all students and NQTs are thus well placed to take forward the thoughtful, flexible teaching approaches required for *Curriculum for Excellence*.

### **2.2 Progress over the two years of this Aspect Review**

**2.2.1** The final version of the Experiences and Outcomes for *Curriculum for Excellence* was published at the end of April 2009. During the year, aspects of guidance were published, including early components relating to assessment and qualifications in June 2009. The first three documents in the *Building the Curriculum*<sup>10</sup> series have been available for some time. The remaining two, *Building the Curriculum 4: skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work* and *Building the Curriculum 5: a framework for assessment* were published during the course of 2009/10. This developing landscape meant that universities did not have a comprehensive set of reference points for preparing student teachers for *Curriculum for Excellence* until the second year of this Aspect Review. In the first year, university staff were at the very early stages of familiarising themselves with all aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Over the two years of this Aspect Review, almost all universities made good or very good progress in developing staff's understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*, and in fostering positive attitudes and dispositions towards its values and principles.

**2.2.2** Over the two years of this Aspect Review, all universities have made significant progress in their own knowledge and in their ability to develop a deep understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*. A few universities have increased the momentum of their development to a remarkable degree. Attitudes and dispositions of staff towards *Curriculum for Excellence* are now markedly more positive. Across most university departments, staff have a clear understanding of their role and show considerable enthusiasm for *Curriculum for Excellence*. In the best practice, staff speak of a 'change of culture' and of *Curriculum for Excellence* being embedded in all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment. Most staff show a clear understanding of the values and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and are in a strong position to teach students how to undertake curricular changes in the future. As a result of this good progress, most students and NQTs now have a strong foundation on which to build their understanding of ways of working which reflect the values and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**2.2.3** Students and NQTs from almost all universities consider that they are well prepared overall for *Curriculum for Excellence*. They show a growing understanding of

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/index.asp>

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the Experience and Outcomes and a good grasp of the principles of curriculum design. They are making progress in understanding how to use these effectively to ensure a broad general education for all young people, as defined in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**2.2.4** Although all universities show progress over the two years of the Aspect Review, there remains variation between establishments in the degree of understanding shown by staff and in the state of preparedness of students for *Curriculum for Excellence*. In most universities, leaders have created a clear strategic plan, set targets and monitored progress. A few have appointed key staff to oversee the development and permeation of *Curriculum for Excellence* across the faculty or school of education. These approaches have helped ensure consistency of practice across departments. As a consequence, these universities have made significant, coherent progress in equipping staff and students for *Curriculum for Excellence*. In a small number of instances, a more piecemeal approach to developing knowledge of *Curriculum for Excellence* has led to variation across departments in the knowledge of staff, and in the standards applied by staff to evaluate students' understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This in turn has led to concerns, reported by EA staff and headteachers, about a lack of consistency in the readiness of NQTs to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**2.2.5** The review team noted some difference between the preparedness of primary and secondary-based students and NQTs to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*. In secondary departments, university staff had not always modelled the variety of approaches required for successful teaching. However, this view was based on NQTs' university experience during the first year of the Aspect Review. The experience of students the following year had improved significantly in most universities.

**2.2.6** Most headteachers and EA staff reported that those graduates from BEd, BA, MA or BSc courses in education have greater confidence in their skills, and a clearer understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*, than PGDE graduates on entering the profession. Given that BEd, BA, MA or BSc graduates will have been learning about *Curriculum for Excellence* for several years and PGDE graduates for less than one year, this is unsurprising.

**2.2.7** Students and NQTs from one-year PGDE (primary) courses comment that they have not sufficient time during their course to develop the full range of subject content knowledge they will need to teach the full primary curriculum effectively. University staff too highlight the limited time available to develop all aspects of the Standard for Initial Teacher Education in the restricted time available. Headteachers note that they are often required to provide additional support to PGDE graduates to enable them to develop the necessary skills to progress towards the Standard for Full Registration. However, several headteachers also state that PGDE graduates are often very quick learners once they commence their probationary year and that many develop quickly into skilled, able teachers.

**2.2.8** Universities experienced a number of external demands over the two years of the Aspect Review. The increasingly difficult financial climate in which they operate,

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leading to cuts in staffing, has meant that they have had to make choices about priorities for development. Over the session 2008/09, many university staff began working with the draft Experiences and Outcomes before publication of the final version in 2009. Many have now achieved familiarity with the final published Experiences and Outcomes, and an understanding of the components of a broad general education in terms of *Curriculum for Excellence*. A full appreciation of how pupils' progress is to be assessed and reported is yet to be achieved, not least because national guidance was only recently published. This has set challenges for university staff as assessment is a crucial dimension of learning and teaching. Unsurprisingly, NQTs are insecure in their understanding in the area of summative assessment and national qualifications. They need to continue to be supported in their professional development, so that increased experience, understanding, knowledge and skills will take them towards improved mastery of all aspects of the curriculum as they progress to the Standard for Full Registration and beyond. This highlights the importance of schools and EAs in continuing to support the learning of NQTs in this vital area of their development.

**2.2.9** Universities regularly audit their programmes and courses, and continually review and update their provision. Almost all universities have carried out extensive audits of their programmes and courses to assess how well they address the demands of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Building further on these audits, most universities have made good progress in embedding aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence* across all areas of their provision. Some were able to make a good start by adjusting a number of courses and programmes in minor respects, or building in clearer reference to the principles of curriculum design. Further, deeper review of courses and programmes is ongoing at most universities as *Curriculum for Excellence* continues to evolve.

### **2.3. Development of university staff expertise**

**2.3.1** University staff at all levels have applied themselves diligently to developing their understanding of the philosophy underpinning *Curriculum for Excellence*. Almost all universities have made good progress over the two years of the review in helping staff develop the necessary understanding, knowledge and skills. As a result, almost all staff are preparing students skilfully and enthusiastically for *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**2.3.2** Universities have adopted a variety of ways of ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of the philosophy underpinning the principles of curriculum design, and are familiar with the Experiences and Outcomes. Approaches have included collegiate sessions, input from invited speakers, awaydays, conferences and cross-sectoral staff meetings. These approaches have become embedded in the universities' programmes of continuing professional development (CPD). Aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence* permeate most training and development events. Several universities hold large, individual *Curriculum for Excellence* conferences, often in partnership with placement schools, designed to showcase and share good practice. Above all, most universities have worked hard to develop in staff the positive attitudes and confidence necessary to develop students' understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*. In this, they have largely been successful. Staff enthusiasm for taking forward *Curriculum for Excellence* is

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generally high. The most recent annual national conference promoted by the Scottish Teacher Education Committee<sup>11</sup> offered a very useful vehicle for sharing practice across the universities and into schools.

**2.3.3** Many university staff had been involved in writing and reviewing the Experiences and Outcomes, trialling them in schools, *Curriculum for Excellence* research projects, consultations and secondments to support national work on curriculum advice. Universities are now represented on the *Curriculum for Excellence* Management Board. Some university staff were initially reluctant to engage with *Curriculum for Excellence*. By the end of the two years of the Aspect Review, however, almost all staff are knowledgeable and fully committed to preparing students for their role in taking forward *Curriculum for Excellence* in their classrooms.

**2.3.4** Students and NQTs commented positively on the increased knowledge and engagement of staff evident over the two years of the Aspect Review. Staff at all universities have improved their understanding and consistency in interpreting *Curriculum for Excellence* principles over the sessions 2008/09 and 2009/10. Many have reviewed handbooks, course descriptors, reading lists, web links etc to ensure that these fully support *Curriculum for Excellence*. Overall, staff are positive and enthusiastic about the possibilities offered by *Curriculum for Excellence* to improve the attainment and achievements of all pupils. Promoted staff in universities commented that they no longer felt 'left out' of the ongoing development of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

### **2.4 Developing the high quality learning and teaching approaches necessary for *Curriculum for Excellence*.**

**2.4.1** Students and NQTs overall are convinced of the need to make learning exciting, engaging and relevant to pupils' experiences. Many effectively promote, in particular, young people's enjoyment of learning.

**2.4.2** Students at all universities initially analyse their own learning before relating the results of this analysis to the learning of the young people they teach. This allows them to empathise with learners, to study the learning process in depth and to appreciate the range of ways in which children and young people learn. They then apply this knowledge to the curriculum. Students and NQTs are able to take part in meaningful discussions on the design principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and describe how they plan for aspects of children's learning experiences accordingly. They focus clearly on developing understanding and skills through a wide range of engaging and challenging learning activities. Almost all students and NQTs relate their pedagogical approaches to a view of the curriculum which focuses on the needs and aspirations of each child.

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<sup>11</sup> Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC), the body representing the seven Scottish universities who provide teacher education.

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**2.4.3** By the second phase of this Aspect Review, headteachers reported that NQTs have a good knowledge about a variety of teaching approaches and that their skills in using these are developing well. The probationary year is seen as important in enabling NQTs to add expertise in the practical aspects of teaching to the knowledge and understanding they have acquired at university. In this way, most NQTs are learning to use their understanding of formative assessment techniques, active learning, collaborative learning, direct interactive teaching and class, group and individual approaches more effectively in the course of their teaching.

**2.4.4** There remains scope for NQTs to develop their teaching skills further on entry to their probationary year. Many headteachers, EA staff and NQTs state that the high level of support and professional development which NQTs receive during their probationary year is very important to help them achieve the practical skills of teaching and class management.

**2.4.5** Many students and NQTs in the primary sector are concerned about the depth of the subject knowledge they will need to teach the full range of the primary curriculum. A number of students and NQTs interviewed did not appreciate the importance of having a sufficient depth of understanding and knowledge of each subject in order to teach it. There was some acceptance of the view that it would be appropriate for teachers to learn enough, in some subject areas, to keep just ahead of their pupils, or 'we could learn together'. This approach runs the risk of fostering superficiality in learning.

**2.4.6** Staff in most universities highlight the links between high-quality learning and teaching, and the learner-centred nature of *Curriculum for Excellence*, by modelling active, collaborative approaches to learning and formative assessment strategies. They mirror the learning approaches they expect to be carried out by students in schools. Students reported that at times the high number of students in some lectures and tutorials can act as a barrier to interactive teaching and learning. In those universities with high numbers of students attending individual lectures, staff make strong efforts to address the need for interactive group or paired work, often by complementing lectures with additional, smaller tutorials and/or workshops. Practice in this area is too variable across universities.

**2.4.7** Staff and students use a variety of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) very effectively to promote individual study. Lecture notes, presentations and key documentation are rendered accessible to students who can refer to them during their personal study time or when preparing assignments. Almost all students use a wide range of information and communications technology (ICT) very competently. Many use film and video clips or interactive white boards very effectively to share with their peers their assignments or the good practice they have encountered on placement. Students' skills in using ICT in the course of their learning are high. However, a number of headteachers commented that NQTs' skills in using ICT to support young people's learning are less well developed. A small but growing number of students currently use Scotland's national intranet for education, *GLOW*. Most make very good use of the different VLEs used by the universities to submit assignments, share practice and

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develop learning. A few NQTs stated that they prefer to use social networking sites to link with fellow professionals to share good practice as this approach to communication is already part of their lives.

### **2.5 Interdisciplinary learning**

**2.5.1** An interdisciplinary approach to learning is embraced enthusiastically by primary students and NQTs. A number of secondary students and NQTs experienced difficulty in gaining experience in this approach across curriculum areas when out on placement because they found that not all departments in schools were fully committed to this type of work, or able to collaborate with other departments. This situation improved over the course of the two years of this Aspect Review, and students in secondary settings are increasingly able to give examples of effective interdisciplinary work. This remains an area for further development.

**2.5.2** Many students and NQTs appreciate that well-developed knowledge of subject content is necessary in order both to teach the subject and to develop interdisciplinary approaches. A few are not clear enough about the relationship between subject knowledge and interdisciplinary learning, and do not fully understand the need to build out from a deep knowledge and understanding of each subject area, and add an extra dimension to learning through links across curriculum areas. Secondary NQTs are not always confident about improving young people's attainment in areas outwith their own subject.

### **2.6 Outcomes for students: understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence***

**2.6.1** Universities made significant progress in developing students' understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* over the two years of the Aspect Review.

**2.6.2** University staff, headteachers, EA personnel, students and NQTs are strongly of the view that NQTs are committed, sound and reflective practitioners, with a good understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*. NQTs have a good grasp of theory and are well able to engage with research. They have good experience of engaging in the kind of reflection on their practice which will help them teach *Curriculum for Excellence* well and improve outcomes for learners. They understand the need to continue to develop knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

**2.6.3** Students and NQTs understand the importance of developing their own understanding of, and approaches to, their professional responsibilities. Courses at all universities are aimed at helping them become genuinely reflective, critical, independent thinkers. In this, universities have been successful.

**2.6.4** Students and NQTs feel that their university education created for them a *Curriculum for Excellence* environment. They do not regard *Curriculum for Excellence* as a series of 'new' ideas. They have worked within no other curriculum framework and are learning to build young people's learning along these principles. As far as many



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students and NQTs are concerned, *Curriculum for Excellence* represents the only approach to developing young people's learning.

**2.6.5** By their fourth year of the BEd, BSc, MA or BA course, almost all students are well prepared to use the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* in planning children's learning. They show a good understanding of the principles of curriculum design as well as the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities, and are very enthusiastic about the opportunities to develop the learning of children and young people in creative, exciting, practical ways. Their ability to use the Experiences and Outcomes effectively is more variable. Whilst most are well able to ensure an appropriate level of challenge to children and young people, a few do not yet fully appreciate how to use the Experiences and Outcomes effectively to help young people build on what they know already whilst ensuring a deep understanding of what they are learning. Students are increasingly clear about the intended role of *Curriculum for Excellence* in raising standards of achievement overall, although this understanding requires to be developed further. They have a clear understanding of their role in developing literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

**2.6.6** Overall, students from four-year courses are more confident in their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum than PGDE students. However, all groups of students have a firm grasp of the key features of *Curriculum for Excellence* by the time they graduate.

**2.6.7** NQTs report that school staff sometimes assume that NQTs are more knowledgeable about *Curriculum for Excellence* than some teachers in schools because they have very recently graduated. Many schools and EAs make good use of this perceived expertise by involving NQTs in school and, occasionally, EA-based development groups and working parties. EA staff reported that a number of NQTs are making a positive impact on approaches to curriculum improvement and pedagogical development, especially in small schools. This impact is also reflected in other ways. A high number of NQTs lead school clubs and out-of-hours activities in a range of areas, thus extending young people's learning in less formal settings. EA staff consider that NQTs bring energy and new ideas, and that this is making a difference to the learning experiences and broader achievements of young people.

### **2.7 Readiness of NQTs to understand and use the Experiences and Outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence*.**

**2.7.1** Fieldwork carried out during the second year of the Aspect Review found that staff and students at almost all universities have improved their knowledge, understanding and experience of using the Experiences and Outcomes across a range of subject areas. University staff considered that students have overtaken staff in some schools in their preparedness to undertake short term planning of learning based on *Curriculum for Excellence*.

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**2.7.2** NQTs overall regularly use the Experiences and Outcomes in planning young people's learning. In the primary sector, this is strongest in literacy and numeracy. In the secondary sector, NQTs are more familiar with the Experiences and Outcomes relating to their specialist subject. A number of NQTs are using the Experiences and Outcomes to plan young people's learning in health and wellbeing during their probationary year. The depth to which they were able to do this depends to a large extent on the stage of preparedness of the school in which they are carrying out their probation year.

**2.7.3** Whilst a majority of primary based students and NQTs have a good knowledge of the Experiences and Outcomes in most subject areas, there is significant variation between universities in the readiness of students to use them with skill to take forward pupils' learning. A few students and NQTs expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to teach the basics of reading to young children. They feel that this has not been covered in enough depth at university, and that class teachers on placement do not always have time to reinforce this key aspect of teaching sufficiently.

**2.7.4** In addition, the need to build on young people's prior learning, often expressed in terms of 5-14, presents a challenge. Many students do not have a clear understanding of the benchmarks based on the 5-14 curriculum. During this time of development of *Curriculum for Excellence*, many schools have continued to use the strands and levels contained in the 5-14 curriculum as benchmarks in their tracking of children's progress in learning. When out on placement in schools, therefore, students find themselves at a disadvantage in planning to build on pupils' prior learning using the outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. NQTs report that they are expected to use national assessment materials to confirm their judgement about young people's progress when they have limited understanding of the 5-14 curriculum. NQTs also report that school staff understand their dilemma, and give them a good level of support. This issue is a temporary one, which should be resolved as schools increase their knowledge of *Curriculum for Excellence* and develop appropriate systems for tracking and assessing young people's progress.

**2.7.5** This Aspect Review found that secondary subject specialists were at early stages of embedding literacy and numeracy Experiences and Outcomes into their subject teaching. Although some NQTs expressed confidence in their ability to develop literacy and numeracy through their subject teaching, headteachers occasionally found this to be at a superficial level.

**2.7.6** Almost all primary NQTs feel that their university has prepared them well to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*. A similar proportion report that their placement experience has had the same effect. Being new to the profession and not having had experience in teaching within a previous curriculum is seen as a great advantage. NQTs described themselves as open to change and ready to take on personal responsibility.

**3. How well are universities developing the ability of student teachers to teach literacy and numeracy in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*?**

**3.1 Literacy and numeracy: common features and distinctions**

**3.1.1** Most primary students and NQTs have a clear understanding of what constitutes literacy and numeracy in terms of *Curriculum for Excellence* and are developing an understanding of the relevant Experiences and Outcomes. Secondary students are less clear about how to use the Experiences and Outcomes in their subject teaching. Universities set assignments that require students regularly to highlight areas in which their teaching practice on placements develops literacy and/or numeracy. In this way, students are becoming more confident and skilled in identifying and including the development of aspects of literacy and numeracy across different areas of learning.

**3.1.2** In almost all universities, staff are developing students' knowledge and understanding of literacy and numeracy well. Courses and programmes have been reviewed, and now include frequent reference to these important aspects of learning. English and Mathematics staff deliver generic inputs to programmes on literacy and numeracy. In addition, many subject specialist staff deliver lectures and tutorials on how to develop literacy or numeracy through the relevant subject areas. Many university staff, in particular primary specialists, are explicitly developing literacy and numeracy across all courses and programmes. Many secondary subject specialists are beginning to help students to identify opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy at an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. Many NQTs in secondary settings have an awareness of the Experiences and Outcomes in their particular subject. They understand the need to develop pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy but are not always sure about how to do this.

**3.1.3** NQTs in primary settings feel better able to address literacy and numeracy than those teaching in secondary settings. BEd/BA/MA/BSc graduate NQTs consider that their course provides good opportunities to learn about the literacy and numeracy Experiences and Outcomes. Headteachers report that PGDE graduates are less secure in their knowledge in starting their probationary year, but work hard, largely successfully, to overcome this.

**3.1.4** Few secondary-based NQTs are as yet using literacy and numeracy Experiences and Outcomes systematically in their subject teaching. Although some NQTs expressed confidence in their ability to embed literacy and numeracy into their subject teaching, this was occasionally at a superficial level. A small number of secondary NQTs report that they do not have time to teach literacy and numeracy skills because of demands on time to get pupils through course work. Overall, these NQTs understand that they have a responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy but this remains an area for further development.

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**3.1.5** A few students and NQTs commented that effective development of students' understanding of literacy and numeracy is too dependent on the skills, expertise and interests on individual tutors. As a result, students' experiences are not always consistently good within, as well as across, universities. A number of NQTs feel that a more consistent approach amongst tutors to developing students' understanding of literacy and numeracy is needed.

**3.1.6** University staff generally show greater confidence in their ability to develop students' skills in, and positive attitude to, literacy than numeracy across a range of subject areas and interdisciplinary learning. In turn, most students show a greater degree of confidence in their ability to develop pupils' literacy than numeracy skills.

**3.1.7** This, though, was not true in all cases. The review team found examples of universities in which students were more confident in and enthusiastic about their learning in numeracy than in literacy. Students at these universities relate their confidence in numeracy to their perception of the quality of the teaching they received. These universities demonstrate particularly good practice in developing students' own numeracy skills, and in turn teaching students how best to develop pupils' skills in numeracy. Their students and NQTs enjoy numeracy and take pride in making links between numeracy and other areas of learning.

### **3.2 Literacy**

**3.2.1** University staff, headteachers and NQTs consider that most NQTs have appropriate skills to develop pupils' literacy effectively. Almost all NQTs are developing pupils' literacy skills across other subject areas to some degree, and a growing number are embedding literacy fully into their teaching.

**3.2.2** However, a small number of NQTs are not well enough prepared to develop literacy across all aspects of learning. Occasionally, NQTs and students develop literacy through interdisciplinary topics only, rather than embedding such learning throughout all subject areas.

**3.2.3** A common approach across all universities is that lectures give students insight into the theory underpinning the development of literacy. These lectures are followed by tutorials in which good teaching methodology is modelled and discussed. Tutors have increased the demands on students to make reference to research in literacy in their assignments. In these ways, student teachers are being prepared to identify opportunities to develop literacy through all curriculum areas and, further, to plan for this in such a way as to offer appropriate challenge to all pupils. To do this well, they will need to develop further their understanding of progression in learning. There were many very good examples of primary students in particular developing literacy in their interdisciplinary activities, and increasing numbers of examples of good practice among secondary students.

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**3.2.4** The development of literacy through secondary subject areas beyond English is still at an early stage. Not all university staff are fully aware of how best to teach students to pay appropriate attention to literacy and numeracy while teaching pupils in the individual subject areas. Students' experiences on placements do not always help them to develop this aspect of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Because of these factors, several groups of PGDE (Secondary) students were as yet unsure about how to develop literacy at an appropriate level of challenge to young people, through their subject area.

**3.2.5** Although many subject specialist NQTs in secondary settings have a knowledge of the Experiences and Outcomes in their particular subject, they are not always sure about how best to develop literacy. Many found it easier to teach literacy through some subject areas than others. For example, history was seen to offer good opportunities to develop a range of literacy skills. In practice, any subject in which listening, talking, reading and writing is used as a way of learning provides opportunities to develop literacy skills.

**3.2.6** The improvement in universities' approaches to developing understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* in the second year of the Aspect Review is increasing the knowledge and skills of secondary-based students in these areas.

### **3.3 Numeracy**

**3.3.1** In terms of numeracy, students and NQTs are at a slightly less well developed stage of understanding than in literacy. The efforts of a number of universities to address this issue have resulted in significant improvements to the confidence and skill of students in some universities and NQTs to teach numeracy.

**3.3.2** During the two years of this Aspect Review, almost all universities increased the focus on numeracy across their programmes of initial teacher education. Staff now give focused input, in the form of lectures and tutorials, to highlight students' awareness of numeracy and its application to practical situations.

**3.3.3** Overall, students can identify where opportunities to develop numeracy occur in their teaching. Their awareness is being heightened by their experiences in university and on placement. They are beginning to plan specifically to develop numeracy across a range of subject areas at an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. This will be an area for further development at most universities.

### **3.4 The development of students' own skills in literacy and numeracy.**

**3.4.1** In order to gain entry to one of the seven universities which provide ITE in Scotland, all students must possess a National Qualification at SCQF<sup>12</sup> level 6 (Higher grade or equivalent) or above in English, and National Qualifications Course award at SCQF level 5 (Credit Standard Grade or Intermediate 2, or equivalent) or above in

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<sup>12</sup> Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

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mathematics. Although possession of these qualifications does not of itself guarantee expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy, university and EA staff report that almost all NQTs have the necessary literacy skills and numeracy skills to teach these areas effectively.

**3.4.2** A small number of students experience some difficulties with their own skills in literacy and numeracy which has the potential to limit their ability to model good practice in their teaching of *Curriculum for Excellence*. In particular, these issues focus on:

- their inconsistent use of spoken English in class; and
- their lack of confidence in working with concepts contained in upper stages of the primary mathematics curriculum, in particular, mental calculation, including fractions and decimals.

**3.4.3** Staff generally identify any difficulties with students' literacy through their interaction with them, assessing their assignments and in the course of feedback. Tutors often offer one-to-one support to students to address specific issues. Where a student declares a difficulty or disability eg dyslexia, all universities offer a range of standard supports. These typically include additional time for assignments, strategies to address spelling or organisational difficulties, one-to-one support and/or online courses designed to improve their skills. Where appropriate, students make use of the university's cross-faculty Support for Learning department. These interventions can help identify and resolve students' problems, but are not always universally effective.

**3.4.4** University, EA and school staff report challenges around supporting a very small number of students and NQTs with severe difficulties in literacy, most commonly in the area of dyslexia. This can often be resolved by providing a wider range of support. However, a few headteachers and EA staff reported that, occasionally, students and NQTs had severe difficulties in literacy. University staff reported that these students often worked very hard to overcome any difficulty and ensure that young people received appropriate teaching in key aspects of literacy.

**3.4.5** In order to deliver the numeracy aspect of *Curriculum for Excellence* well, newly qualified teachers will require to be confident in basic mathematical skills and understanding of concepts, and be able to enthuse pupils with a positive attitude to numeracy. Most universities have improved their approaches, several significantly, to helping students identify and address any weaknesses in their own skills in numeracy. However, in some universities, identification of a student's difficulties in numeracy depends on self-referral by the student. There is therefore scope for students experiencing difficulties with aspects of numeracy to enter the profession without this having been noticed or addressed. Where a student's difficulty is identified, staff are often able to offer a variety of support including online courses, directed reading and one-to-one assistance. Universities' cross-faculty Support for Learning departments do not routinely offer help in addressing difficulties in numeracy.

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**3.4.6** One university has for some time used an on-line, self-directed resource which helps students to diagnose and address any weaknesses in their understanding of mathematics. Following a growing awareness of the need for improved approaches to addressing students' own skills, a second university plans to introduce a similar system. The importance of identifying and addressing such weaknesses cannot be overstated.

**3.4.7** One university has taken forward a research project aimed at exploring its students' abilities and confidence in mathematics. This research raised a number of issues, including the following.

- Primary students may need to receive more teaching geared towards understanding the basic concepts contained in the primary mathematics curriculum before embarking on courses to develop pedagogy in mathematics teaching. If they are to be able to teach numeracy across a range of subject areas, they will need a firm grasp of the mathematical concepts underpinning all aspects of numeracy.
- There is a need to address primary students' sometimes negative attitudes to their competence in mathematics.
- An SQA Higher in mathematics gives students a better understanding of patterns and mathematical concepts than a mathematics qualification at a lower SCQF level. However, it does not of itself guarantee a high level of either competence in the content of the primary mathematics curriculum or a positive self-concept in mathematics/numeracy.

### **4. How well are universities preparing student teachers to embed into their teaching those aspects of health and wellbeing which are the responsibility of all teachers?**

#### **4.1 Development of students' ability to teach health and wellbeing within *Curriculum for Excellence*.**

**4.1.1** Students and NQTs show good awareness that health and wellbeing is a key area for pupils' learning. However, students' current learning in health and wellbeing is occasionally piecemeal. In most universities, aspects of health and wellbeing are taught through elective courses, with the consequence that these might be omitted from a student's learning.

**4.1.2** Staff at almost all universities recognise that they have further work to do in this area to raise the profile of health and wellbeing and ensure comprehensive coverage of those aspects of health and wellbeing which are the responsibility of all teachers.

**4.1.3** The need for teachers to promote a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure and model behaviour which promotes health and wellbeing is well

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addressed overall through the context of learning about teaching approaches. Students and NQTs are learning effectively to use learning and teaching methodologies which promote effective learning and show sensitivity and responsiveness to the wellbeing of each child and young person.

**4.1.4** Universities have long emphasised the importance of creating a positive classroom ethos in which each young person feels safe and supported. They now need to develop this further to include a clear understanding of why this is crucial to good outcomes in terms of health and wellbeing. New teachers are also learning to understand anti-discriminatory, anti-bullying and child protection policies and to know the steps to be taken in any given situation, including appropriate referral. Many NQTs feel that they carry out much of their teaching of health and wellbeing by creating a positive ethos and learning climate within the classroom. Most recognise the need to pay close attention to pupils' mental wellbeing. They take good account of health and wellbeing through behaviour management approaches, classroom ethos and whole school events such as anti-bullying campaigns. However, NQTs would welcome greater support in this area. In their view, there has been too little opportunity to consider the practical application of their theoretical inputs. Almost a quarter of NQTs report that they are not well enough prepared to teach the aspects of health and wellbeing which are the responsibility of all teachers.

**4.1.5** Typically, aspects of health and wellbeing are taught at universities through different curriculum and subject areas, for example, PSD, behaviour management, and, in secondary courses, home economics, religious and moral education or physical education.

**4.1.6** There are individual examples of very good curricular inserts which develop very well the knowledge and understanding of those students who take part. Some universities are now making considerable progress in addressing aspects of health and wellbeing in their courses and programmes. However, the embedding of health and wellbeing outcomes is at an early stage in universities and many schools. Although some individual aspects of provision are of high quality, the development of health and wellbeing is not yet systematically embedded into the learning of all students.

### **5. How well do universities prepare student teachers to ensure continuity of learning across transitions?**

#### **5.1 Developing students' understanding of learning across points of transfer**

**5.1.1** A growing trend in most universities is for primary and secondary students to have some opportunities to learn together. Joint lectures and/or tutorials make it easier for students to appreciate the 3-18 continuum of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The range and number of such opportunities varies across universities. At one university, joint working by the entire undergraduate student cohort is a key principle for the ITE courses. In several universities, staff have begun to amalgamate classes, in most cases for reasons



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of principle, and occasionally for practical, administrative purposes. A very positive outcome of this approach is the development of students' knowledge about young people's learning in different sectors, including pre-school, primary and secondary settings. This knowledge is improving students' understanding of how to ensure appropriate progress in pupils' learning across points of transfer and helping them to recognise and address barriers to learning at these times. The ability to build appropriately on young people's prior learning, avoiding the dips in attainment and achievement which can be associated with transfer between schools and establishments, is a key aspiration of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**5.1.2** A few students and NQTs from the secondary sector found that cross-sectoral lectures at university were geared principally towards the primary sector and that most examples of good work in *Curriculum for Excellence* were drawn from primary schools. It was unclear to them how they could build most effectively on young people's experiences in primary schools once they reached the secondary stage.

### **5.2 Students' and NQTs' ability to support young people well at points of transfer.**

**5.2.1** The importance of ensuring a seamless transfer for all children is a strong feature of work in all programmes. NQTs and students show a strong awareness of:

- their role in providing a 3-18 curriculum for all children and young people;
- the importance of developing a wide range of pupils' skills, to enable them to take full advantage of curriculum opportunities as they progress through the system;
- the importance of benchmarking and tracking of pupils' progress to ensure appropriate progression in learning; and
- the need to offer particular support to vulnerable young people as they move from one establishment or sector to another.

**5.2.2** In smaller universities, staff in primary and secondary sectors traditionally work very closely together and are knowledgeable about practice across the sectors. Several larger universities have begun to make primary and secondary specialist lecturers more aware of each others' practice, for example by facilitating access to all areas of the VLE or organising joint projects involving pre-school, primary and secondary settings. The practice, mentioned above, of educating primary and secondary based students together for aspects of their courses is helping students' understanding of the way the sectors work. In one university, practice includes common working for the first two years of the primary and secondary BEd courses. BEd students at this university were positive in their view of how they learned about partnership work across the sectors.

**5.2.3** A key issue at points of transfer is pupil progress and transfer of attainment/achievement information. Many students do not have a clear understanding of the benchmarks used in most placement schools as these are based on pre- *Curriculum for Excellence* assessment systems or similar. While this remains the case, NQTs are at a disadvantage in planning to build on pupils' prior learning using the outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Only around half of NQTs sampled felt they

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could effectively support young people at points of transition. Their reservations were based mainly on their school's continuing to assess young people using 5-14 criteria. As schools become more adept in planning and assessing young people's learning based on the use of Experiences and Outcomes, this issue will become less significant. However, this remains an area for further development.

### **6. To what extent does partnership working between universities, education authorities and schools help students prepare for *Curriculum for Excellence*?**

#### **6.1 Placement experience**

**6.1.1** Close partnership working between EA, schools and universities is crucial to ensure the best possible experience for students and NQTs. The impact of this partnership is often effective, but overall is too variable across the country.

**6.1.2** Schools and teachers now understand and accept that they have a vital role to play in teacher education. Most provide a positive, supportive experience to students. Almost all students and NQTs report that their experiences on placement have been highly positive, and that school staff have been supportive of their needs and have worked well with universities to allow projects and research tasks to be completed. In terms of developing their understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*, students on primary courses reported more positive placement experiences overall than did students on secondary courses. A number of secondary NQTs found only limited opportunities to develop *Curriculum for Excellence* in schools. They believed this to be because the school, department or individual colleagues were themselves at an early stage in the development of their understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This situation had improved over the second year of this Aspect Review.

**6.1.3** Over a number of years, EA staff had built up effective partnerships with staff in the universities, many of these at a personal level. Many students, headteachers and EA personnel give high praise to several universities, citing strong support during placements and involvement with authorities in the development of programmes. One EA officer stated: 'They are professionals, working with professionals, producing professionals.' However, many EA staff now report that the recent high level of staff changes at all universities has adversely affected the closeness of this working relationship. Many school staff no longer have a personal relationship with university staff members responsible for the progress of individual students. In addition, the adoption of a centralised system of student placement has led to less personal contact between schools and university staff. Many school and university staff comment that they have lost a valuable working relationship with their university or school 'partner' which had been helpful in the past in offering particular support to individual students.

**6.1.5** NQTs from two universities highlighted the benefits they had experienced through the policy, common to both, of enabling students to undertake placements in different types of schools. These included, for example, small rural school and large schools in

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urban areas of considerable social challenge. NQTs reported that the need to adapt their approaches to meet the needs of learners in different contexts was very useful in their development as flexible, adaptable teachers, responsive to the needs of all young people.

**6.1.6** A few students and NQTs reported an occasional tension between school staff and university staff, highlighting a lack of mutual understanding about roles and responsibilities in educating students. A number of EA personnel reported that the effectiveness of partnership working varied in quality depending on the university. A few found a lack of clarity surrounding the roles of school and university staff, particularly in cases where a student was struggling to meet the requirements of the course.

**6.1.7** Universities are beginning to take more positive and creative approaches to developing partnerships which will impact on learners' experiences. A particularly good example is one university's partnership with staff from a local EA, based on developing the pedagogy of mathematics. Links between universities aimed at improving aspects learning and achievement in schools could be developed more extensively. Another university invites serving teachers and headteachers to help deliver aspects of ITE courses and programmes. Students and NQTs at these universities report a very positive experience of effective partnership working.

**6.1.8** A common view from headteachers and EA staff is that professional observation by university staff of students during placement has become too limited. Students and school and university staff value these visits highly. There is not always a shared view between universities and schools regarding the expectations of the level of support which is appropriate for each partner to provide for students. Overall, there is a need for universities, EAs and schools to work more closely together to support the development of students and NQTs.

### **6.2 Partnership working to continue the professional development of newly qualified teachers.**

**6.2.1** In the final phase of this Aspect Review, university, EA and school staff, NQTs and students highlighted the promotion of reflection and independent thought in educating teachers for a long-term commitment to developing knowledge and skills. Initial teacher education is seen very positively by all stakeholders as the start of a career-long continuum of learning/CPD.

**6.2.2** NQTs have a sound understanding of the philosophy of *Curriculum for Excellence*, but both they and headteachers felt they need to know more about the application of theory to classroom practice. This need is being effectively addressed through further development of skills in learning, teaching and class management during the programme of CPD offered to NQTs by education authorities during their probationary year. This offers the kind of classroom-centred learning which NQTs feel to be most relevant at this stage of their career.

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**6.2.3** Many EAs have not invited universities to contribute to their programme for probationer teachers as they did previously. EAs stated that cost was a minor factor in their decision to provide much of the CPD from their own personnel. The major factor was the perceived need for NQTs to devote their probationary year to the mastery of the craft of teaching, for which they need CPD of a very practical nature. EA staff and NQTs did not consider that university staff were best equipped to provide this sort of professional development.

### **7. What challenges are yet to be overcome by universities in preparing students for full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*?**

**7.1.1** Staff at universities will need to continue to explore ways of addressing the following challenges in preparing students to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*:

- Limited time in the PGDE programmes of initial teacher education restricts the range of opportunities for staff to ensure that students acquire an appropriate knowledge of curriculum content and skills development, as well as the necessary pedagogical expertise.
- Universities experience some difficulty in ensuring consistent, high-quality experiences for students to observe good practice in *Curriculum for Excellence* and to allow them to develop their expertise when on placement in schools and centres. Most students learn effectively through very positive, supportive experiences while on placement. Further joint working between schools and education authorities as they move towards full implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence*, with improved understanding among school and authority staff, will help reduce this gap in some students' experience.
- Universities and schools need to ensure that all primary NQTs have a clear understanding of how to teach the basics of reading.
- There is a need to ensure an appropriate balance between NQTs' knowledge of theory and research, and their acquisition of practical teaching skills.
- A small number of university staff members, especially in secondary subjects, were not yet effectively communicating to students the opportunities afforded by *Curriculum for Excellence* to make significant improvements to pupils' learning and achievement. This was much less evident by the second year of this Aspect Review.
- A few students need better opportunities to improve their own literacy and numeracy skills and gain confidence in these areas. Universities need more robust approaches to identify and address any weaknesses in students' understanding and skills in these areas.

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- Several universities are experiencing declining demand from local authorities for staff CPD at a time when they are actively seeking to develop partnership by offering CPD to authority staff in aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This raises the need for more comprehensively developed and wide-ranging collaboration between local authorities and universities across the continuum of teacher education and development.

### 8. CONCLUSION

**8.1.1** All universities involved in teacher education have made progress in the way they are preparing new teachers to deliver *Curriculum for Excellence*. Several have taken significant steps to improve the levels of knowledge and understanding about *Curriculum for Excellence* of staff and students, and have been successful in developing the ability of NQTs to teach many aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence* effectively.

**8.1.2** The improvement in universities' approaches to developing understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence*, increasingly evident during the second year of this Aspect Review, is increasing students' knowledge and skills in teaching both literacy and numeracy. Their readiness to teach those aspects of health and wellbeing which are the responsibility of all teachers is not so well developed. Further work is needed to ensure better outcomes in this area.

**8.1.3** Headteachers consider that almost all NQTs have the basic skills necessary to teach *Curriculum for Excellence*. Primary graduates have had more experience, and are hence better equipped, to teach some aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*, notably interdisciplinary learning, than secondary graduates. There is considerable variation between universities in the readiness of students to use Experiences and Outcomes with confidence. In those universities where students are better prepared for *Curriculum for Excellence*, a more consistently positive student experience has been achieved by clear strategic direction from promoted staff.

**8.1.4** EA staff report that overall, NQTs increasingly show a sound understanding of *Curriculum for Excellence* and are beginning to translate that understanding into classroom practice. Several school and university staff members commented that students had overtaken staff in some schools in their preparedness to undertake planning of learning based on *Curriculum for Excellence*. This situation is steadily improving as schools and centres continue to develop their approaches to *Curriculum for Excellence*.

**8.1.5** Most university staff have developed their understanding of, and ability to use, *Curriculum for Excellence* significantly over the two years of the Review. Their involvement in shaping the development of *Curriculum for Excellence* has increased their motivation. Many demonstrated increasingly positive attitudes and a high level of skill in preparing students for all aspects of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The momentum

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of development in some universities has been remarkable. However, there remains too much inconsistency of practice between universities.

**8.1.6** Despite examples of close, productive partnership working between universities, EAs, schools and centres, this area shows headroom for improvement. Closer joint working by all concerned would lead to more consistent, better learning experiences for all students when on placement. Further work needs to be done to ensure a consistently high level of experience for all student teachers across Scotland.