

Curriculum and Assessment Review: Review Aims, Terms of Reference and Working Principles

Review aims

The Curriculum and Assessment Review Group is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the current national curriculum and statutory assessment system, including qualification pathways. The primary goal is to update the curriculum to ensure it is modern, relevant, and effectively prepares children and young people for future life and work. The review aims to balance ambition, excellence, relevance, flexibility, and inclusivity, providing meaningful and rigorous pathways for all individuals aged 16 to 19. This initiative aligns with governmental objectives to eliminate barriers to opportunity at every stage of education and to promote national growth.

The review will build upon existing commitments to high standards in England's curriculum, emphasizing greater breadth and flexibility to ensure no child or young person is left behind. It will ensure that the assessment system accurately reflects students' knowledge and abilities while considering the overall volume of assessments. Additionally, the review will strive for coherence between the curriculum and assessment systems.

The review will address key challenges and obstacles to achievement across all key stages (1 through 5). It will begin by examining limitations present in Key Stages 4 and 5 and then work backward through earlier stages to ensure effective sequencing of learning and removal of barriers in Key Stages 3, 2, and 1.

Specifically, the review aims to:

- Establish a strong foundation in core subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Broaden the curriculum to include subjects like music, art, sports, drama, and vocational studies, ensuring students do not miss out on these areas.
- Ensure that upon completing compulsory education, students are prepared for life and work, equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes to thrive. This includes integrating digital literacy, oracy, and life skills into their learning.
- Create a curriculum that reflects societal issues and diversities, ensuring representation for all children and young people.
- Develop an assessment system that captures the strengths of every student and the breadth of the curriculum, balancing various assessment methods while maintaining the important role of examinations.

The review acknowledges the current challenges within the education system, including staff shortages. It aims to account for these issues and manage the trade-offs necessary to deliver high and rising standards alongside a broad and balanced curriculum. Efforts will be made to ensure that the curriculum and assessment system do not place undue burdens on educational staff and support manageable workloads for teachers, lecturers, support staff, and leaders.

The review will support the innovation and professionalism of teachers, enabling them to adapt their teaching to students' lives and experiences. It will also work towards legislative changes to require all state schools, including academies, to teach the national curriculum. This supports the ambition that every child receives a rich and broad education, taught by excellent teachers nationwide, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to thrive in the future.

In addition, the review recognizes that curriculum and assessment are closely linked to accountability. Therefore, it may offer commentary on this aspect to ensure a comprehensive approach.

The Secretary of State has appointed a Chair for the Review, who will convene the Review Group in consultation with the Secretary of State.

Terms of reference

1. The education system must enable children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills required to thrive as citizens, in work, and throughout life. The Review Group is invited to consider how the curriculum and assessment system can best ensure that every young person develops the requisite knowledge and skills at each stage of compulsory education and to make recommendations accordingly.
2. The Review Group will consider the broad ambition for what every young person should be expected to achieve by age 18 and review the existing curriculum and assessment mechanisms to determine the best means of achieving this, reflecting the Review Aims. The Review Group is invited to make recommendations accordingly.
3. To this end, the Review Group should review the curriculum and mechanisms for assessment at each Key Stage, assessing what is and is not working well, mindful of the Review Group Working Principles.
4. The Review will consider children and young people's education and experiences from the beginning of Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 5, ensuring that children build on their learning and development in the early years. The Review will ensure that the curriculum reflects the issues and diversities of our society and that every child and young person is represented and has access to a broad range of subjects. The Review will pay particular attention to the ceilings to achievement which exist in curriculum and assessment at Key Stages 4 and 5. To ensure that the building blocks and mechanisms for assessing progress over children and young people's educational journey to Key Stages 4 and 5 are fit for purpose, the Review Group should also seek evidence on the condition of the curriculum and assessment at Key Stages 1 to 3.

The Review Group will work in line with the established Working Principles to achieve these objectives.