

EDUCATION SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (NQ) WEBSITE & FUTURE SUPPORT FOR SUBJECT-SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Purpose

1. To update the Board on the position regarding Education Scotland's NQ website, and to outline proposals for the way ahead which takes account of Education Scotland's enhanced remit relating to curriculum, learning and teaching, in particular support for subject-specific professional learning as referred to in *Next Steps*. This paper seeks the Board's views on proposed actions.

Background

2. Following changes to SQA qualifications, we have been reviewing the future of the Education Scotland (ES) NQ website. The resources on the NQ website no longer fully match SQA course specifications across all subjects, although they do provide a range of useful support on approaches to effective learning, teaching and ongoing classroom assessment. To ensure that users are aware of this, a clear notification has been added to the site as a banner on the landing page stating: *'Please be aware that the National Qualifications resources on this site may not support current SQA course specifications, including the removal of units which previously formed part of courses. The future of this site and the resources it contains are currently under review'*.
3. The ES NQ website was created in 2013-14 in the run-up to the first diet of the new National Qualifications (NQs), at a time when teachers were designing courses to prepare learners for the new examinations from scratch. Most of the content was created by teachers commissioned by ES through small contracts, with the key aim of supporting other teachers as they introduced the new NQs in schools and classrooms at that point.
4. Analysis of statistics relating to ES's four websites shows that, since spring 2017, the NQ website has had notably the lowest page views on a per week basis in comparison to the other sites.
5. For as long as the NQ website remains live in its current format, even with the clear notification on the website, there is a risk that a teacher may follow out-of-date advice regarding NQs (due to current changes the NQ specifications), and that young people may be disadvantaged.

Proposed actions: short term – the ES NQ website

6. Education Scotland proposes to shut down its NQ website. In communications to stakeholders relating to this action, ES will highlight the availability on the National Improvement Hub and on Glow of a wide range of resources to support curriculum, learning and teaching in subject areas, along with information about up-to-date guidance on the SQA website.
7. Education Scotland's curriculum area Senior Education Officers will ensure that still-relevant resources from its NQ website remain available through Glow.

Proposed actions: medium term – a creative, collaborative approach to generating up-to-date support for learning, teaching and formative assessment within NQ subject areas

8. Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) plans submitted to Education Scotland in September indicate that a subject-specific focus is starting to emerge in all RICs. RIC leaders are seeing opportunities for networks of teachers to develop or extend professional groupings, and this includes peer support in subject areas in the new regional context. Education Scotland is strongly committed to supporting, coordinating and facilitating these developments.
9. The need to replace the NQ website with up-to-date support for curriculum, learning and teaching and formative assessment in subject areas provides a compelling context and opportunity for early collaboration and co-constructive, creative approaches to generating support, as envisaged for the RICs. We have the opportunity to provide support for the teaching of subject areas which meets current needs and reflects the current context. Building on the recent CAB discussion around progression and transition, we propose to begin by focusing on better progression in learning from S1 to S3 into the senior phase. Support for the primary stages will then follow.
10. The aim will be to focus on the pedagogy of subjects, and to produce statements on good practice in learning, teaching and formative assessment across subject areas. Schools willing to share their practice will be identified, similar to the 'Pioneer Schools' approach. The SCEL team will be involved to advise on incorporating new approaches to professional learning.
11. Education Scotland's curriculum team and Regional Advisors will engage with RIC Leads to explore in detail how this work can be taken forward, agreeing approaches and timescales to suit local needs. It may be possible to draw on RIC funding to support this work.

Discussion

The Board is invited to consider the proposed short- and medium-term actions proposed and discuss the merit and opportunities in taking such an approach.