

The Revised National Curriculum Statement

The Revised National Curriculum Statement *streamlines* and *strengthens* Curriculum 2005 and continues to be committed to outcomes-based education. It is a part of the process of transforming education and training to realise the aims of our democratic society and of the Constitution. Schools have been implementing Curriculum 2005 since 1998, and you will now be familiar with many of the far-reaching changes it introduced.

Why has the curriculum been revised?

A committee was appointed by the Minister of Education in 2000 to review the structure and design of Curriculum 2005, teacher orientation, training and development, learning support materials, provincial support to teachers in schools and implementation time-frames.

The review committee recommended that the curriculum needed to be strengthened by streamlining its design features, simplifying its language, aligning curriculum and assessment, and improving teacher orientation and training, learner support materials and provincial support. A Revised National Curriculum Statement (Revised NCS) should deal with what the curriculum requirements are at various levels and phases and give a clear description of the kind of learner expected at the end of the General Education and Training (GET) band in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

The Revised NCS was developed towards these goals.

What are the principles of the revised curriculum?

The revised curriculum builds on the vision and values of the Constitution and Curriculum 2005. These principles include:

Social justice, a healthy environment, human rights and inclusivity

Learning area statements in the Revised NCS reflect the principles and practices of social justice, and respect for the environment and human rights, as defined in the Constitution. In particular, the curriculum attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability and such challenges as HIV/AIDS.

Outcomes-based education

The philosophy of outcomes-based education remains the foundation of our curriculum. Outcomes-based education starts by designing the outcomes to be achieved by the end of the educational process. The outcomes describe

the knowledge, skills and values learners should acquire and demonstrate during the learning experience.

The Revised NCS describes outcomes-based education as ‘a process and achievement-oriented activity-based and learner-centred education process; in following this approach, Curriculum 2005 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R–9 (Schools) aim to encourage lifelong learning’.

A high level of skills and knowledge for all

The Revised NCS sets high expectations of what South African learners can achieve and aims at the development of a high level of knowledge and skills for all. Social justice requires that those sections of the population previously disempowered by the lack of knowledge and skills should now be empowered.

The Revised NCS sets standards in the learning areas and specifies the minimum knowledge and skills to be achieved by learners in each grade. In this way, the Revised NCS provides direction on how to develop a high level of skills and knowledge in all learners.

Clarity and accessibility

The Revised NCS aims for clear and accessible design and use of language. The learning outcomes and assessment standards are two design features that clearly describe the goals and outcomes each learner needs to achieve in order to proceed to each successive level of the system. The Revised NCS will be available in all official languages and braille.

Progression and integration

Within each learning area, the Revised NCS sets out progressively more complex, deeper and broader knowledge, skills and attitudes for learners to acquire from grade to grade. This is called **conceptual progression**, and the assessment standards in each learning area statement ensure this progression across grades. Progression is a *key feature* of the revised curriculum. **Integration** ensures that learners experience the learning areas as linked and related by making links within and across learning areas. Integration supports and expands learners’ opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and values, and acquire knowledge across the curriculum.

What has changed?

As described above, the Revised NCS still follows the principles, purpose and thrust of Curriculum 2005. Here is a brief overview of things that have changed.

- Some of the learning area names have changed slightly. They are now as follows:
 - Languages (no longer LLC)
 - Mathematics (no longer MLMMS)
 - Natural Sciences
 - Technology
 - Social Sciences (no longer HSS)
 - Arts and Culture
 - Life Orientation
 - Economic and Management Sciences
- The Revised NCS has three curriculum design features (i.e. critical and developmental outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment standards). Curriculum 2005 had eight curriculum design features (i.e. critical and developmental outcomes, specific outcomes, range statements, assessment criteria, performance indicators, phase organisers, programme organisers and expected levels of performance).
- The critical and developmental outcomes remain central but have been slightly reworded.
- Specific outcomes, assessment criteria, range statements, performance indicators, phase organisers, programme organisers and expected levels of performance are no longer features of the curriculum.
- Learning outcomes (LOs) describe the knowledge, skills and values that learners should achieve in the Revised NCS.
- Assessment standards (ASs) describe the level at which learners should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes in the Revised NCS.
- Assessment Standards (ASs) are now grade specific, showing what is expected of learners in each grade and how conceptual progression will occur in each learning area.
- Integration of knowledge, skills and values occurs within and across learning areas, and is balanced with conceptual progression from grade to grade within a learning area.
- Learning outcomes and assessment standards for the reception year (Grade R) are now specified in the curriculum.
- At the Foundation Phase, the learning areas are presented through the same learning programmes as before, these being Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. At Intermediate Phase, Languages and Mathematics are

distinct learning programmes and provinces may approve other integrated learning programmes.

In the sections that follow we explain the features of the Revised NCS.

The outcomes in the Revised NCS

Critical and developmental outcomes

The critical and developmental outcomes are a list of outcomes inspired by the Constitution. They describe the kind of citizen it is hoped will emerge from the education and training system and underpin all teaching and learning processes. The critical outcomes include core life skills for learners, such as communication, critical thinking, activity and information management, group and community work. The developmental outcomes focus on enabling learners to learn effectively and become responsible, sensitive and productive citizens.

The critical outcomes envisage learners who will be able to:

1. Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
2. Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community.
3. Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
5. Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes envisage learners who are also able to:

8. Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
9. Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
10. Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
11. Explore education and career opportunities.
12. Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

Learning outcomes and assessment standards per learning area

The Revised NCS consists of an Overview document and a Learning Area Statement for each learning area. Each Learning Area Statement is a document setting out the outcomes for that learning area, from Grade R to Grade 9. The main design features of each learning area are the *learning outcomes* and the *assessment standards*.

What is a learning outcome?

The Revised NCS defines learning outcomes as follows: Each learning area has its own set of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes were designed down from the critical and developmental outcomes. The learning outcomes give a specific focus to knowledge, skills and values for each learning area that learners should achieve by the end of the General Education and Training band, making them clear and understandable.

What is an assessment standard?

The policy states that assessment standards describe the minimum level, depth and breadth of what learners should demonstrate in their achievement of each learning outcome. They embody the knowledge, skills and values required for learners to achieve learning outcomes for each grade and do not prescribe method. Assessment standards are grade specific and show how conceptual progression will occur in a learning area. Assessment is performed against the assessment standards for a particular grade. Therefore, they are a key feature for the progression of learners from grade to grade.

Learning areas

A learning area is a field of knowledge, skills and values which has unique features. Each learning area also has connections with other fields of knowledge. The Revised NCS defines the following eight learning areas:

<p>Languages (Lang.)</p> <p>Language is used for personal, communication, educational, aesthetic, creative, cultural, political and critical purposes, plus the rest of the curriculum is learnt through language. Six LOs focus on listening, speaking, reading/viewing, writing, thinking and reasoning, and language structure and use. These are integrated when engaging with ‘texts’ in various media.</p>	<p>Mathematics (Maths)</p> <p>Mathematics involves observing, representing and investigating patterns and quantitative relationships in physical and social phenomena and between mathematical objects. Mathematical symbols and notation form a specialised language. Five LOs focus on number and operations, patterns (into algebra), space and shape (geometry), measurement, data.</p>
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<p>Natural Sciences (NS)</p> <p>Science has been shaped by the search to understand the natural world through observation, codifying and testing ideas. Three LOs promote scientific literacy, and focus on scientific investigations, science knowledge, and the relationships between science, society and the environment.</p>	<p>Social Sciences (SS)</p> <p>Relationships between people, and between people and the environment, are studied as they vary over time and place. Six LOs focus on enquiry, knowledge and understanding, and interpretation or issues within history (Hist.) and geography (Geog.).</p>
<p>Technology (T)</p> <p>People have used knowledge, skills and available resources to develop products or systems to meet our needs and wants. Three LOs focus on applying technological processes and skills, knowledge and understanding, and the relationships between technology, society and the environment.</p>	<p>Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)</p> <p>Learners study private, public or collective use of resources in satisfying needs and wants, with the impact of exploiting resources. Four LOs focus on the economic cycle, sustainable growth and development, and managerial, consumer, financial and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.</p>
<p>Life Orientation (L/O)</p> <p>Learners are guided and prepared for life and its possibilities. Five LOs promote health, social, personal and physical development, and in the higher grades orientate learners to the world of work.</p>	<p>Arts and Culture (A&C)</p> <p>Learners develop their potential in drama, visual arts, dance, and music. Four LOs focus on creating and interpreting art works, history of the arts, culture and heritage, individual and group participation, and communication and expression.</p>

Learning programmes

Learning programmes are concrete expressions of learning area statements that are guided by the Revised NCS but developed by teachers, schools and provinces. They are structured and systematic arrangements of activities, content and assessment that foster the attainment of the learning outcomes and assessment standards for each phase.

In the Foundation Phase, there are three learning programmes: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. In the Intermediate Phase, Languages and Mathematics are distinct learning programmes. Other integrated learning programmes may be developed by schools with the approval of the provincial departments of education. In the Senior Phase, there are eight learning programmes, each based on one learning area.

Time allocations for each learning programme prescribe the relative weighting (of time and emphasis) to be given to each learning programme. For the Foundation Phase the time allocations are:

LEARNING PROGRAMME	TIME ALLOCATION
Literacy	40%
Numeracy	35%
Life Skills	25%

For the Intermediate Phase the time allocations are:

LEARNING AREA/PROGRAMME	TIME ALLOCATION
Languages	25%
Mathematics	18%
Natural Sciences	13%
Social Sciences	12%
Technology	8%
Economic and Management Sciences	8%
Life Orientation	8%
Arts and Culture	8%

Languages in the Revised National Curriculum Statement

The Revised NCS Policy states that ‘In a multilingual country like South Africa, it is important that learners reach high levels of proficiency in at least two languages, and that they are able to communicate in other languages.’

Across all the learning areas, the Revised NCS strongly recommends that learners’ home languages should be used for learning and teaching whenever possible. This is particularly important in the Foundation Phase where children learn to read and write.

When learners have to make a transition from their home language to an additional language for learning and teaching, careful planning is necessary and the Revised NCS Policy states that:

- The additional language should be introduced as a subject in Grade 1.

- The home language should continue to be used alongside the additional language for as long as possible.
- When learners enter a school where the language of learning and teaching is not their home language, teachers need to ensure special assistance and supplementary learning of the additional language is provided until such time as the learner is able to learn effectively in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT).

Assessment

In what ways is assessment the same in the revised curriculum?

According to the Revised NCS, assessment is still a continuous planned process of gathering information on learner achievement as it was in Curriculum 2005. It is based on the principles of outcomes-based education. Outcomes-based education makes it clear what learners are expected to achieve.

The Revised NCS states that assessment should be:

- transparent and clearly focused
- integrated with teaching and learning
- based on predetermined criteria or standards
- varied in terms of methods and contexts
- valid, reliable, fair, learner-paced, and flexible enough to allow for expanded opportunities

In what ways is assessment different in the revised curriculum?

The Revised NCS assists the process of learner assessment by placing assessment standards at the heart of the assessment process in every grade. The assessment standards describe the level at which learners in each grade should demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes and the ways (depth and breadth) of demonstrating their achievement. This means that the teacher has a clear understanding of exactly what needs to be assessed for each learner in each grade in terms of knowledge, content and skills.

How does the Revised NCS define continuous assessment?

The Revised NCS describes continuous assessment as a model of assessment that 'encourages integration of assessment into teaching and the development of learners through ongoing feedback'. As in Curriculum 2005, continuous assessment is the chief method by which assessment takes place in the revised

curriculum. The Revised NCS highlights the following points about continuous assessment.

- learning is assessed regularly and records of learners' progress are updated throughout the year
- learners are active participants in learning and assessment
- feedback is given to learners by appropriate questioning, oral and written comments that focus on what was intended to be achieved by an assessment activity, and encouragement to learners
- integrated assessment includes assessing a number of related learning outcomes within a single activity or providing a variety of assessment methods and opportunities through which learners can demonstrate their abilities
- assessment strategies cater for a variety of learner needs (language, physical, psychological, emotional and cultural)
- summative assessment is planned at the beginning of the year to include a variety of assessment strategies

What are the different purposes of assessment?

The Revised NCS policy states that the main purpose of assessment should be to enhance individual growth and development and to monitor the progress of learners and to facilitate learning. Towards this goal, assessment is used in the following ways:

- Baseline assessment of prior learning takes place at the beginning of a grade or phase and establishes what learners already know. It assists in planning learning programmes and learning activities.
- Diagnostic assessment is used to find out the nature and cause of barriers to learning that specific learners might be experiencing. Guidance, support and appropriate interventions follow such assessment as the need arises.
- Formative assessment is used to inform learners and teachers about learners' progress so as to improve learning. Constructive feedback is given.
- Summative assessment gives an overall picture of learners' progress at a given time, for example, at the end of a term or year or on transfer to another school.
- Systemic assessment is the monitoring of the performance of the education system overall. It is based on a representative sample of schools and learners selected provincially or nationally.

Assessment strategies

According to the Revised NCS, the choice of assessment strategies is subjective and will be unique to each teacher, grade and school, depending on the teacher's professional judgement. Factors such as space and resources available may influence the decision a teacher makes. However, even when resources are similar, teachers may make different choices.

The methods chosen for assessing activities must be appropriate to the assessment standards to be assessed. The purpose of assessment must be clearly understood by all learners and teachers involved. Competence can be demonstrated in a number of ways and thus a variety of methods need to be provided for learners to demonstrate their abilities more fully.

What assessment records are you expected to keep?

The school assessment programme should provide the details of what records and how these records must be kept. Record keeping should include a record book or file, progression schedules and learner profiles.

Record book

Each teacher should keep an up-to-date record book or file. This would include information such as learners' names, dates of assessment, name and description of assessment activities, the results of assessment activities according to learning areas or learning programmes and comments for support purposes. This type of record keeping would be used throughout the year for all aspects of continuous assessment. We provide some examples of assessment record sheets that might be used in a record book or file.

Learner portfolios

A portfolio is a method of keeping a record of learners' work in a file or box. It gives the learner and teacher the opportunity to consider a number of assessment activities together. Learners would keep written work or records of practical exercises and should be personally responsible for maintaining their portfolios. It should be something special to them and at the end of the year they can take it home to show their parents.

Progression schedule

A progression schedule must be completed and signed by the principal and a departmental official at the end of each year. This is a record with summary information about the progress of all learners in the grade in the school. This is not relevant to daily record keeping.

Learner profile

A learner profile must be kept for each learner. This is a continuous record of information that should accompany learners throughout their school careers. It should give an all-round impression of a learner's progress, including the holistic development of values, attitudes and social development. This is not relevant to daily record keeping.

Assessment codes

The Revised NCS Policy notes that many different assessment codes can be used. It goes on to recommend that whatever assessment code is used, feedback is more effective when it is combined with comments.

A number of different assessment codes are listed in the Revised NCS Policy documents. They state that the province will determine assessment codes that will be used in that province.

The national assessment codes that the policy document identifies are:

4 = Learner's performance *has exceeded* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.

3 = Learner's performance *has satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.

2 = Learner's performance *has partially satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.

1 = Learner's performance *has not satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.

Reports

Your school assessment programme should determine the method of reporting and how often reporting occurs. However, the Revised NCS states that teachers must report at the end of each term using formal report cards, thus setting a basic minimum for reporting.

One of the main purposes of reporting is the accountability of teachers to learners, parents, the education system and the broader community in assessing learners. Reports may be written, oral or practical presentations, displays of learners' work and exhibitions. Every report on a learner's overall progress should include the learning achieved, the learner's competencies, support needed and constructive feedback.

What does the revised policy on assessment mean for you in the classroom?

The Revised NCS states that schools and teachers have an overall responsibility for assessment of learners. Each school must develop an assessment programme based on provincial and national assessment guidelines. It needs to have a team made up of representatives from each phase and learning area to facilitate the implementation of this programme.

Teachers are expected to create a valid, reliable and credible assessment process based on the school assessment programme. The school assessment programme must outline clearly:

- the way continuous assessment is planned and implemented
- how record books are to be kept
- assessment codes determined by the province
- internal verification of assessment
- how moderation takes place in the school
- the frequency and method of reporting
- the monitoring of all assessment processes
- the training of staff in areas of assessment

This means the specific details of how you assess and record assessment will be guided by your school assessment programme. In general, the following points will guide assessment in the classroom.

- At the beginning of each year you will do a *baseline assessment* to establish prior learning and to assist in planning your year. You may use a record sheet similar to the class list we provide or a record sheet your school assessment programme recommends. We provide an example for one outcome only. You would need to create similar forms for each outcome.
- During everyday teaching you will be aware of any learners with specific strengths and weaknesses and make notes in your *record book* of anything you think is particularly significant. In this way you can monitor and support the progress of these learners. You may use the example of an observation sheet for informal assessment we provide or whatever record sheets your school assessment programme recommends.
- If you notice that a specific learner is experiencing a barrier to learning, you should ensure a *diagnostic assessment* is carried out. This may require the assistance of a specialist. Diagnostic assessment

should be followed by guidance, appropriate support and intervention strategies.

- Create learner *self-assessment* and *peer-assessment* opportunities at appropriate times to encourage learners to reflect on the learning process and assess their own strengths and weaknesses.
- At various points in each term you would make sure you do a *formative assessment* of relevant assessment standards. You will use a variety of assessment strategies such as exercises, tasks and projects to give learners the opportunity to show what they have learned. You will give learners feedback after any formative assessment to help them improve their performance. You may use one activity to assess a number of different assessment standards or you may use several different activities to assess different assessment standards. You could use either of the record sheets provided depending on which is most suitable for how you choose to assess, or you will use the record sheets your school assessment programme recommends. You can then use the codes your province has determined to record feedback from each learner's assessment.
- Towards the end of each term you will need to conduct a *summative assessment*. This will provide an overall picture of each learner's progress at a given time. You will need to plan summative assessment carefully at the beginning of each year and make sure you include a variety of assessment strategies such as exercises, projects, school and class tests which give learners an opportunity to show what they have learned. As is the case with formative assessment, you may use one activity to assess a number of different assessment standards or you may use several different activities to assess different assessment standards.
- You should report learner progress to parents on a regular basis. This may include written *reports*, oral or practical presentations, displays of learners' work and exhibitions. The Revised NCS states that teachers must also report at the end of each term using formal report cards. Your school assessment programme will decide on the format of these report cards.
- At the end of the year, you will complete *progression schedules* and *learner profiles* using the format your school assessment programme recommends.
- Decisions will be made at a national, provincial, district or cluster level on *common tasks for assessment* that you may need to conduct in your classroom for external moderation. You will be informed of these decisions.
- Participants for *systemic assessment* are decided at a national or provincial level and you will be informed if your learners are involved.

Examples of assessment records

Observation sheet for informal assessment

Date:

Learner's name:

Relevant activity:

Learning outcome and assessment standard:

Strength or weakness noted:

Plan for supporting weakness or extending strength:

Learner self-assessment

[Grade 1]

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Colour the picture that describes your work today:

(three little pics of smiley, less happy, unhappy faces for kids to choose from and colour in.)

I did very well today I tried hard This is not my best work

[Grade 2 or 3]

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Activity: _____

What I did _____

How I did it _____

What resources I used _____

How long did it take? _____

Did I enjoy the work? _____

Was it easy or difficult? _____

I think I did

(box) excellent work (box) good work (box) average work (box)
poor work

Self-assessment of group work

Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity: _____

How did I do?	Yes	No
Did I follow instructions?		
Did I understand the group's task?		
Did I have a task to do?		
Did I do it?		
Did I listen to others?		
Did they listen to me?		
Did I help others?		
How did my group do?		
Did we understand the instructions?		
Could we do the task?		
Did we cooperate by talking, listening and sharing work		
Did we finish on time		

What did we do well? _____

What would we do better? _____

Peer assessment of group work

Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity: _____

Group members					
Did he/she cooperate?					
Did he/she help others and explain or share ideas?					
How did he/she communicate?					
Did he/she work until the task was finished?					

Teacher's group work checklist

Names of learners in the group:

General comments:

	Yes or No	Comment
Did learners listen to the instructions?		
Did all the learners participate?		
Did learners listen to one another?		
Did learners work together?		
Did learners complete the task?		
Did the group have any problems?		
Did learners solve any problems they had in the group?		

Example of baseline, formative or summative record sheet

LO 1: Listening (see Revised National Curriculum Statement for further details of assessment standard in column 4)

Class list	AS: listens attentively to instructions and announcements and responds appropriately	AS: Demonstrates appropriate listening behaviour by listening without interrupting, showing respect for the speaker, taking turns to speak and asking questions for clarification	AS: Listens with enjoyment to short stories, rhymes, poems and songs from a variety of cultures, and shows understanding	AS: Listens, enjoys and responds appropriately to jokes.	AS: Listens to messages and conveys them correctly
Name					
Name					

Assessment codes

- 4 = Learner’s performance *has exceeded* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.
- 3 = Learner’s performance *has satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.
- 2 = Learner’s performance *has partially satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.
- 1 = Learner’s performance *has not satisfied* the requirements of the learning outcome for the grade.

