



Entitlement Framework Guidance For Special Schools and Learning Centres

Introduction

The Entitlement Framework is about putting the needs, aptitudes and interests of pupils first. It is about every teacher in every school having the highest aspirations for every pupil being taught in that school. It is about equality of access to a broad and balanced range of relevant and engaging courses with clear progression pathways for all our young people.

This short guidance document and the associated case studies follow a two year development project with schools and Learning Support Centres (LSCs) in the special educational needs sector, commissioned by the Department of Education from CCEA. The purpose of this work was to inform the Department's review of how the Entitlement Framework policy should apply in practice to this sector. As you know, the directions specifying minimum course numbers do not apply to Special Schools or LSCs.

This guidance therefore sets out the context and focus for curricular planning for pupils in Special Schools and LSCs in order to meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework. It should be used to inform the range of accredited courses offered to pupils at Key Stage 4 and post-16 to support their progression in life, education and employment. Particular focus is placed on offering accredited courses in literacy and numeracy.

The Department expects this guidance to support appropriate choices for the young people in our Special Schools and LSCs in order to engage them and give them the best opportunities for lifelong progression.

The Department of Education Northern Ireland

The Entitlement Framework (EF)¹ aims to provide access for learners to a broad and balanced curriculum to enable them to reach their full potential, no matter which school they attend or where they live. It is important that learners with special educational needs (SEN) in special schools and learning support centres (LSC) are able to avail of this broad and balanced curriculum and benefit in the same way as their peers in mainstream schools.

The following guidelines are designed to help Special schools and LSCs to meet EF requirements.

1. Curriculum Offer

To give learners a curriculum offer that meets the aspirations and principles of the EF, special schools and LSCs should focus on:

- using accredited qualifications;
- covering KS4 statutory curriculum areas through accredited qualifications; and
- establishing appropriate progression pathways.

2. Course definition for learners with SEN

All learners in special schools and LSCs should have the opportunity to follow a course of study that consists of an extended period of learning. This learning should lead to a quality-assured award (qualification) from a professional body that is independent of the school or centre.

A course should be a process of developing and assessing specific knowledge, understanding and/or skills that will enable the learner to deal with opportunities and challenges in life.

3. Register of Regulated Qualifications

It is important to give learners the opportunity to follow an accredited course of study. All accredited courses (qualifications) will appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications². Qualifications are accredited to either the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) or the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). NQF and QCF qualifications are both suitable for learners with SEN. Credit-based qualifications offer particular benefits to learners with SEN because they are flexible and accessible. Special schools and LSCs should consider fully the wide range of credit-based qualifications available for their learners.

4. Learning Programmes

Special Schools and LSCs should aim to identify learning programmes of qualifications for their learners. Learning programmes consist of qualifications and learning chosen to suit the individual learners. Schools should, where possible, tailor learning programmes to suit their learners' individual needs and aspirations. Although it is desirable to identify an individual learning programme for each learner, where resource or time constraints do not allow this, schools can identify learning programmes for groups of learners with similar ability and needs.

Learning programmes will:

- include qualifications ranging from Entry Level to Level 1;
- cover the three Key Stage 4 curriculum areas of literacy, numeracy, Learning for Life and Work (LLW) as well as a vocationally related element;

- provide an opportunity (not necessarily through a qualification) for learners to
 - practice or gain experience in independent travel;
 - pursue leisure-related courses; and
 - experience learning outside the school environment.

Learners (or their representatives, as appropriate) should have the opportunity to be involved in identifying a learning programme that will take into account their interests, abilities and aspirations for the future.

5. Literacy and numeracy

Schools should aim to offer accredited courses or qualifications in literacy and numeracy to all learners, where appropriate. For some learners, such as those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), it may not be appropriate or beneficial for schools to focus on using accredited qualifications for literacy and numeracy learning.

6. Curriculum areas

Schools should make every effort to offer qualifications covering the three curriculum areas of literacy and numeracy, Learning for Life and Work (LLW) and a vocational element. Undertaking qualifications in all three curriculum areas may not be appropriate for some learners. The curriculum areas covered will depend on the ability and needs of the individual learner and, importantly, their desired progression route.

7. Area Learning Community

Special Schools and LSCs, as active members of their Area Learning Community, should continue to optimise the opportunities available to provide access to a broad and balanced offer of qualifications for learning programmes.

8. Appropriate Level

The level of qualifications used in a learning programme will vary, depending on each learner's needs. Qualifications in a learning programme can range from Entry Level to Level 1. In some circumstances, learners may be able to undertake a Level 2 qualification and this can be included within a learning programme. Not all qualifications in a learning programme must be at the same level. The level of each qualification will depend on the learner's strengths. For example, some learners may be at Entry Level 3 for literacy, Entry Level 1 for numeracy and capable of taking some vocational courses at Level 1. Their learning programme should reflect this. Teachers should use their judgement or assessment to determine the appropriate level for each qualification in each learner's learning programme.

9. Number of qualifications in a learning programme

Learning programmes should have an appropriate number of qualifications and other forms of study or learning to suit each learner's needs.

10. Progression routes

When identifying which qualifications to use in a learning programme, it is important to consider each learner's progression route or destination. Before selecting the qualifications for a learning programme, schools should consider the entry requirements of the learner's preferred Further Education (FE) college, training courses or other routes. All learners should have the opportunity to participate in choosing qualifications for their learning programme.

¹ <http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/curriculum-and-learningt-new/curriculum-and-assessment-2/entitlement-framework.htm>

² <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>

Schools should engage with other providers as early as possible to ensure that they select the appropriate qualifications.

11. Transition planning

When considering progression routes, special schools and LSCs should take particular account of the transition planning process guidelines, as set out in paragraphs 6.36 to 6.51 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.