The ACE Partnership Approach to Curriculum and Assessment – Summary for use on school websites

The ACE Curriculum Framework

One of the greatest challenges facing all schools is to ensure that their students continue to build their knowledge, understanding and skills year on year, both within school and as they move from one school to the next. Key to this is making sure students work at a level that is appropriate to their ability; not too hard to cause unnecessary difficulty and not too easy such that boredom and lack of progress set in. If schools design an interesting and relevant curriculum that is carefully pitched at students’ abilities and interests then young people are most likely to progress to meet their full potential.

At the moment secondary schools in England are reviewing what they teach to take into account: a new National Curriculum at Key Stage 3; new, more challenging GCSEs and also new style A levels. The new National Curriculum has a greater focus on the development of knowledge, alongside the removal of the assessment levels which students and parents have become familiar with over the past 20 years.

Schools in the ACE Partnership have been working together closely over the last year to design a common core curriculum and assessment system which takes into account these changes. This will ensure that all students in ACE Partnership schools share an entitlement to the same core of knowledge, understanding and skills throughout high school. It will define the progress steps each year for all students, building on achievement in their primary school, to fully achieve their potential at the end of Year 11. It will also ensure that students are assessed at the end of their time in ACE Partnership high schools in a consistent way.

The core curriculum and assessment model that has been agreed;
- Is focussed on developing the key concepts, knowledge and skills needed for success in key stage 4
- Is based on high expectations and challenge for all
- Uses regular assessment and feedback which gives all students the chance to develop a secure understanding of the key ideas which match their age related expectations
- Incorporates high quality end of topic assessments which help students develop the skills needed to tackle GCSE examination questions
- Uses data from assessments to reliably identify what students have / have not understood and informs future teaching and learning, including intervention needs.

The core curriculum will not be radically different to the current curriculum in schools and whilst ACE Partnership schools will follow the same core there will still be flexibility for individual schools to teach in a way that best meets the interests and needs of their students.

The ACE Assessment Model

From September 2015 all ACE Partnership high schools will be following the new core curriculum for all students in school. In order to assess their learning teachers will continue to carry out regular teacher assessments. ACE Partnership high schools have also agreed to carry out new Summative Assessments. These will assess students’ abilities in each subject they have been studying at high school. Depending on the nature of the subject some assessments will be paper based and some will be practical. From Summer 2016, the results of these along with teacher assessment information will be shared with students and parents and also passed to ACE Partnership upper schools. This will keep parents well informed and assist teachers in planning their new students’ next stage of learning and so ensuring that transition from high school to upper school is as seamless as possible.
It is important to say that, unlike Key Stage 2 SATs and GCSEs, the results of these summative assessments will not be reported in league tables by the government. The assessments are to inform the next stage of your child’s learning and their personal outcomes will be confidential to individual students, their parents and teachers.

Outcome

ACE Partnership schools expect students to become secure in their learning, through strong teaching, commitment from students and a focus on ensuring that students develop a firm knowledge and understanding of the subject they study. As a result we can be confident that they are well prepared to achieve the best possible achievements at GCSE and beyond. For many of our students we will push further to ensure they are exceeding age related expectations. Furthermore, where students are not yet secure, teaching staff will revisit the area of learning to ensure that understanding is embedded and students can move confidently onto the next stage of their learning.

Terminology

Key Stage 1; School Years 1 and 2, ages 5 to 7
Key Stage 2; School Years 3 to 6, ages 7 to 11
Key Stage 3; School Years 7 to 9, ages 11 to 14
Key Stage 4; School Years 10 and 11, ages 14 to 16