

GTIP Think Piece –Planning and developing the curriculum (Eleanor Rawling)

*Changing curricular requirements at all key stages mean that the skills necessary to plan and develop the curriculum are essential for beginning teachers. In *Planning and Developing the Curriculum Parts 1 and 2*, Eleanor Rawling, Research Fellow at the University of Oxford, provides an introduction to the key issues and offers practical guidance for PGCE students. Suggested templates and approaches are provided for critical consideration.*

Note – this Think Piece was written in 2009 and referred to the national curriculum in place at the time of writing.

Part One will consider the teacher's active and creative role in developing the curriculum at the level of courses and outline schemes of work for the key stage and year group. It covers definitions and purposes, sequences of planning, the role of concepts, and the importance of geographical enquiry in planning schemes of work.

Part Two (p7) will consider the different meanings of progression and will examine varied approaches to planning for progression through the subject content, the teaching and learning experiences provided and the outcomes in pupils' performance.

All of the diagrams contained in this Think Piece come from Eleanor Rawling's book *Planning Your Key Stage 3 Geography Curriculum*. If you find this Think Piece useful, it is highly recommended that you purchase this book as it develops many of the ideas here to a much deeper level. You may purchase the book from our [shop](#).

The activities for this Think Piece, together with links to papers, diagrams and frameworks which are referred to in the activities, are contained within an accompanying document. **Download:** [Word](#)

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Introduction: What is Curriculum Planning? What is Curriculum Development?

In simple terms curriculum planning is concerned with making decisions about what we teach, why we make these choices and how we organise teaching and learning. Sometimes the term curriculum development is used; indeed the two terms are often used interchangeably, although there is a distinction. Planning suggests organising and sorting out material, often that which is already provided (such as a programme of study or GCSE syllabus), whereas development implies taking things beyond what is stated or provided; i.e. development is a more creative process in which the resulting curriculum has characteristics original to you and your school.

All curriculum development includes planning but not all planning involves wider curriculum development. The GA uses the term 'curriculum-making' to refer to the planning and development process, but the original term curriculum development will continue to be used in this Think Piece. *'Curriculum development may be defined as the process of planning and developing the curriculum content and the experiences that pupils are to receive in schools in order to help them make progress in geography, enjoy the experience and appreciate the relevance of geography to their own lives.'* (Rawling, 2007)

Why do you, as geography teachers, need to plan or develop the curriculum? Surely, with the National Curriculum programme of study at KS3 and the GCSE and A level syllabuses at 14-19, the content of the curriculum is already established and you need only to allocate topics to curriculum slots? In fact, this is a mistaken view. However detailed or sparse the national curriculum requirements, there is always a need to review and reorganise them to clarify the implications for teaching and learning (curriculum planning) and ideally to expand and develop them to fit the circumstances of your school and your students (curriculum development).

At one time in the 1970s and 1980s, many geography teachers took on a substantial role in developing the content and character of their geography courses with authoritative support texts (e.g. Graves, 1979) and through involvement in Schools Council Projects (Rawling, 1991). Since 1991, national curriculum constraints have inhibited and greatly reduced such activity. However, the 2006-07 review of KS3 has not only reduced content prescription but has provided more of a framework of concepts and skills, and criteria to allow for planning content, teaching/learning and assessment in all subjects (see chapter 3 in Rawling 2007). This situation provides new opportunities but the minimal nature of the requirements makes it essential that subject specialist knowledge and skills are applied in translating these requirements effectively. It should be noted too that the idea of designing a curriculum based on topics rather than subjects is being discussed again and many schools are trying out topic-based curricula in years 7 and 8. As a result, a process of curriculum development becomes not only desirable but a positive necessity if the contribution of geography is to be explicit!

Activity 1 - Topic or subject based curriculum?

In this activity, supported by a short paper, students discuss the relative merits of a topic or subject based curriculum.

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Planning and development at the school level have to relate to wider constraints. [Figure 1](#) might provide a helpful way of considering where your school curriculum development activities fit into the wider context. Three levels of curriculum planning are recognised for a subject, here written with KS3 in mind:

1. The general level is normally undertaken by national bodies. In the past, this might have been the curriculum projects funded by the Schools Council. Today, this general level is carried out by QCA acting on behalf of the government and, to some degree, in consultation with the subject communities. This level results in the establishment of a broad National Curriculum framework for each subject which can then be used by schools at level 2.
2. The school level is, as the name suggests, undertaken by subject departments and subject teachers, who develop their own course plans outline schemes of work and assessment plans for the subject.
3. The level of classroom development is undertaken by the individual class teacher, often in discussion with colleagues. It results in more detailed schemes of work, together with plans and resources for individual lessons and sequences of lessons.

In a topic-based curriculum, levels 2 and 3 may be undertaken by groups of teachers of different subjects but it is essential that subject specialists in participating subjects are directly involved in the planning and teaching of the subject.

Activity 2 - Levels of curriculum planning

In this activity students consider the extent to which a planning framework can be adapted for KS3, KS4 and post 16 work.

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A Sequence of Curriculum Planning and Development

Like many tasks, planning the curriculum is a strange mixture of rational organisation and serendipity. You need to start off with a reasonably logical process of planning in mind and be ready to address any statutory requirements, but you also should be ready to respond to that interesting article you read in a newspaper, that opportunity for funding that has arisen at school, or that good idea you had in the shower! One approach to curriculum planning is set out in circular form in [Figure 2](#) (The Curriculum Planning Circle). The circle is used because, although the most logical approach might seem to involve starting with aims (1) and finishing with assessment strategy (5) and schemes of work or lesson plans (6), there is no reason why we always have to follow such a linear sequence. Many excellent curriculum plans have resulted from the inspiration provided by a new resource or the flash of creativity received at a workshop about a particular approach to assessment. As long as all these stages are covered in some way, you should end up with the appropriate product for your pupils.

What you need to remember is that curriculum planning is not at all a 'cut and dried' process, but more of a dialogue between yourself, the subject (geography) and the students you have in mind. As Kincheloe and Steinberg explain (1998) 'the well-prepared teacher is not one who enters the classroom with a fixed set of lesson plans but a scholar with a thorough knowledge of the subject, an understanding of knowledge production, the ability to produce knowledge, an appreciation of social context, a cognizance of what is happening in the world, insights into the lives of her students, and a sophisticated appreciation of educational goals and purposes.' This may sound daunting but it is definitely opening the door to your professional input!

Activity 3 - Using a curriculum planning circle

In this activity students consider the effect on the curriculum of using different parts of a planning circle as a starting point.

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As an example, [Figure 3](#) is a KS3 curriculum plan developed around the idea of changing scales of enquiry and for which year 9 (personal scale) was partially inspired by the resources and activities of the Young People's Geographies project. What you should remember is that your creativity can really come into play now, in both KS3 and at 14-19, to produce fresh new curricula that will stimulate and reinvigorate geography in your school.

Activity 4 - Evaluating a KS3 curriculum plan

In this activity students examine a plan for KS3, evaluate it and discuss how it might be adapted for different situations.

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Is there such a thing as concept-based curriculum planning?

Key concepts are an essential element of the new KS3 PoS and yet there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and confused debate about these. Seven key concepts are listed in the PoS: place; space; scale; environmental interaction and sustainable development; process (physical and human); interdependence; cultural understanding and diversity. These are not new. All were present in some way in the older versions of the National Curriculum (e.g. in PoS headings) though they were not explicitly emphasised. Concepts are also highlighted in the current GCSE and A/AS criteria as items for awarding bodies to address in their syllabus planning.

Many have referred to the need for concept-based curriculum planning as if a different approach is now required. This is not the case. The planning and development process is essentially the same. The concepts and ideas of the subject represent economies of thought which are useful if geography is not just to be a mass of memorised fact. For example, the concept of space is an abstract idea that stands at the top of a hierarchy of more specific ideas such as location, pattern, distribution, interaction, distance. When geographers use the term, it conjures up certain kinds of meaning in the context of physical and human geography. These are distinctive from, but overlap with, the meanings and contexts in which mathematicians understand 'space'.

You will need to bear in mind the concepts and big ideas of geography when selecting content, planning teaching and learning, and devising assessment. Concepts are not something to teach to pupils directly, nor will you wish to hand out definitions for them to learn. They do not imply a set selection of content, nor will you need to produce units of work entitled Place, Space, Scale etc. (though you might have units of work designed to bring out particular concepts – e.g. a unit on the UK designed to draw out understanding of Place and Interdependence). Essentially, as students deepen their knowledge and broaden their understanding of geographical matters and skills, they will gradually reach awareness and gain understanding of the big ideas of the discipline of geography.

What you will need to do is ensure that you understand what is meant by each of the key concepts, so that you can start thinking creatively about the kinds of teaching and learning experiences your pupils will need if they are ever going to understand them as well. [Figure 4](#) shows a table designed to start you thinking about one of the KS3 concepts (Cultural Understanding and Diversity). The table addresses the following questions about the concept:

- What is it? Why are geographers interested in it?
- What teaching/learning experiences must be provided for pupils if they are to gain understanding of the concept?
- What outcomes might be expected of KS3 pupils if they do understand this concept?

It suggests that if you want your students to understand the concept of cultural diversity and to gain a more nuanced understanding of different cultures (rather than just be able to repeat a learned definition) then they must; study a range of places and cultures in different parts of the world; explore the notion of identity and factors that give rise to feelings of common identity; consider the lives of alienated groups and outsiders at a small (playground/school) or local scale; and have first hand exposure to people and resources from different cultures.

For further reflection on concepts and their role in geography and curriculum development chapter 4 in *Planning Your Key Stage Curriculum* (Rawling 2007b) where there are concept pages for all seven of the Key Stage 3 concepts.

Activity 5 - Getting to know the key concept, 'Cultural Understanding and Diversity'

In this activity students consider how to develop understanding of the concept of 'cultural understanding and diversity' in a short unit of work. They are then encouraged to apply the way they considered this to other key concepts.

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For some approaches and templates to use in planning schemes of work see Rawling (2007b) pp. 41-45 and for some ideas about cultural topics see Rawling (2007a).

Planning a Scheme of Work

So far, the discussion has focused on planning and developing the curriculum at the level of the KS course or year group. However, the process of curriculum development also applies to schemes of work covering anything from two or three lessons to a half-term or term. The GA's *KS3 Geography Teacher's Toolkit* series provides guidance at this level. However, there are some important general principles about planning a scheme of work which you may find helpful and so these will be dealt with here.

The geography National Curriculum is based on a view of geographical enquiry originally set out by the National Curriculum Geography Working Group in 1990 (DES and Welsh Office, 1990). Geographical enquiry is envisaged as an active process of investigation in which young people are fully engaged and the rubric in all versions of the National Curriculum since the 1991 programme of study make clear that knowledge, understanding and skills are to be developed through the involvement of pupils in the enquiry process. This is why it is important to focus scheme-of-work planning around enquiry.

In the 2007 programme of study there is a gradual progression from pupils mainly asking questions, observing, recording and communicating findings at KS1 to a full sequence of enquiry involving additional activities of analysing and evaluating evidence, considering alternative viewpoints and reaching conclusions at KS3. In addition, it should be remembered that the context of topics and places studied becomes more complex with progress through the KS1, 2 and 3 programmes of study. The emphasis throughout is on what pupils must do, not on what teachers must teach. However, the implication is that if pupils are to take part in and develop a full range of enquiry approaches and skills, the teacher must provide opportunities for them to do all these things. For instance, if you want pupils to plan their own enquiries and be capable of 'creating new interpretations of place', then they must be given opportunities to plan their own sequences of work and to reflect on existing interpretations of places rather than relying on the teacher for these.

At this point, consider the degree of direction and support pupils will be given. Some people think of enquiry as meaning open-ended activities in which pupils are independently discovering things for themselves; others see it, certainly at KS3, as a tightly teacher controlled set of training activities. In fact neither is wholly correct because enquiry work can and should include both kinds of activity and a full range of more or less structured approaches in between. [Figure 5](#) presents a teaching-learning continuum showing a range from those activities that are closely teacher-directed to those in which the pupil has control. Whether the teaching and learning situation is one of exposition/response (as

in a teacher giving a lecture or explaining a theory to the class) or creative activity with minimum support (as in pupils carrying out an independent project or piece of creative writing) it may be described as enquiry if the activity is oriented towards answering questions, opening up problems and issues and moving towards general principles and solutions. The key to all this is the teacher who manages and organises an appropriate range of teaching and learning experiences suitable for the pupils. Questions are therefore fundamental to enquiry. [Figure 6](#) shows a scheme of work about Imagined Places. It has been planned using a template that highlights the sequence of enquiry questions (columns 1 and 2) and suggests a link between these and the key concepts (column 3) and key processes and skills (column 4) from the programme of study.

You may find this a useful template for developing your own scheme of work. It is not intended to imply a rigid sequence of questions that must always be taken in full. Sometimes it may be appropriate to start from an interim point (e.g. by envisaging the future or predicting the impact of a development). The kind of enquiry may require missing out one or more steps (e.g. decision-making) or undertaking a smaller enquiry loop using only two or three steps (e.g. when carrying out a structured teacher-led piece of work analysing some photographs or statistics). Some pieces of work may not ostensibly follow an enquiry route at all, but merely focus on some serious and critical questioning of a situation or definition. However, the template in [Figure 6](#) has the benefit of reminding us about the kind of questions geographers ask and the kinds of ideas and processes we are exploring. It also makes a useful planning template for developing a scheme of work, if you wish to work in this way. Note that this is equally applicable to planning work focused on a place as it is for a theme or issue.

Activity 6 - Planning a scheme of work (or unit of work)

In this activity students use and/or evaluate a framework for planning for enquiry.

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For more about the issues related to enquiry, see the Think Piece on [Geographical Enquiry](#) by Gill Davidson.

What Kind of Curriculum Planner Am I?

The way we approach planning anything new, whether it's the family holiday, buying a new house, or the development of a new geography curriculum, reflects what kind of person (or geography department) we are. I was made suddenly aware of this fact when talking to a financial adviser. I noticed that he had a diagram characterising people on the basis of their investment behaviour on a continuum, ranging from secure and cautious to adventurous and risk-taking. This seemed to be a useful way to consider curriculum planning as well so I borrowed the approach (see [Figure 7](#)). It seems particularly apposite in the context of the 2008/09 'credit crunch'! This is not meant to be critical in any way. All types of planning exist and provide perfectly good approaches to organising a curriculum. Some people prefer to take a cautious approach either because of their character and background or because the school situation warrants this. Others thrive on taking risks or feel that the school will benefit from exploring new directions.

Activity 7 - What kind of curriculum planner are you?

In this activity students place themselves along a spectrum from cautious to adventurous and justify their choice.

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Of course the main message to take away is that, whatever kind of curriculum developer you are, the important thing is to base your decisions about what to teach and how to teach it on your best understanding of the subject of geography and of its potential contribution to the education of your students. No one - not the government, not QCA, nor the head teacher – is in a better position to do this than you, the specialist geography teacher.

References

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GTIP Think Piece - Planning and Developing the Curriculum Part 2

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What do we mean by progression?

'The object of any act of learning, over and above the pleasure it may give, is that it should serve us in the future. Learning should not only take us somewhere: it should allow us later to go further more easily' (Bruner, 1965)

How can you be sure that the curriculum you plan will 'take students somewhere' and help them to 'go further' or make progress with their geography?

First, here are some definitions and explanations. According to any good dictionary, 'progress' is a noun meaning improvement, development and/or moving forward and so with progression we have the *act* of improving or moving forward. In an educational context, we want pupils, as Bruner suggests, to improve and to be capable of moving further forward. Note that this may refer in a general way to improving the skills and abilities fostered through education (intellectual, social and practical skills such as solving problems, working with others, using word-processing software) but it can also refer to the improvement of subject specific knowledge and skills (for example, understanding location, knowing about places in the news and using maps in geography). As geography educators we want pupils to do both. We want them to improve their general skills and abilities through geography. We also want them to become better in geography itself. This is worth remembering when you are faced with plans for generic, skills-based curricula. You will need to ensure that the plans allow progress to be made in the subject as well as in general skills. But that, of course, leads back to asking what is meant by progress in geography!

It is important to distinguish between three different ways of talking about progression in a subject: 1. progression in relation to the inherent structure of the subject; 2. progression in relation to the curriculum experiences planned by the teacher; and 3. progression in pupil performance. These will be dealt with in turn.

Progression in relation to the inherent structure of the subject

Progression in this sense would be related to setting out a hierarchy of concepts/ideas and skills which form the essential elements of the subject to guide curriculum construction, i.e. the structure of the subject. Progress may be assumed if pupils are able to move up the hierarchy of ideas and skills. For example, the teacher might plan for pupils to work first with location and pattern in specific cases before they move on to generalise about spatial principles and the concept of space by applying them in new situations.

There has not been a great deal of work done on subject structure since the 1970s when Norman Graves (1975, 1979), the Geography 16-19 Project (1987) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (DES 1978) attempted to provide meaningful discussions of geography's structure to aid curriculum planning.

Given that we now have key concepts listed in the KS3 programme of study, it might be a good time to do some more thinking about how these help us to understand the subject and plan the curriculum. Academic geographers have been writing about key concepts (Holloway, Rice and Valentine 2003) and their work provides useful insights. It is not that we are likely to want to teach the abstract structure and the key concepts of geography directly to our pupils. Essentially, the argument is that if we, as teachers understand our subject better, we are better placed to plan out appropriate experiences for pupils so that they can be engaged in arriving at general ideas appropriate to their level of understanding.

The concepts and big ideas of the subject represent useful ways of organising our thinking about the subject if geography is not just to be a mass of memorised fact. After all, as Bruner noted, 'knowledge one has acquired without sufficient structure to tie it together is knowledge that is likely to be forgotten' (1965). One way of getting to grips with a big key concept is to 'deconstruct it' by teasing out the network of smaller ideas and generalisations that lie beneath it. For example, Lambert (2007) and Bennetts (2008) provide valuable analyses of some of the more specific ideas which underpin the key National Curriculum concepts of place, space, scale (Lambert) and environmental interaction and sustainable development (Bennetts).

Activity 8 - Using concepts as a planning aid

In this activity students will use Bennett's article to explore the significant ideas and generalizations that are essential to the understanding of the concept of 'environmental interaction and sustainable development'.

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Progression in relation to the curriculum experiences planned by the teacher

Progress will be apparent if pupils are ready for more demanding teaching and learning experiences. For example, having studied one locality where people of a different culture live, pupils may move on to study a range of places and cultures at different scales and in different parts of the world. Or, having mapped the distribution of migrants in a country, pupils might go on to carry out a statistical analysis of the data or to read biographical details of migrants. [Figure 4](#) (second column) gives examples of curriculum experiences appropriate for developing cultural diversity.

Activity 9 - Planning for progression

In this activity students use a framework to consider planning for understanding the concept of cultural understanding and diversity at different key stages.

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Activity 9 is concerned with progression at the scale of the classroom. It is also worth considering curriculum progression at a much more general 'key stage' scale. Back in the late 1980s when the first version of the National Curriculum was being planned, the government appointed Geography Working Group had a broad vision of curriculum progression moving from predominantly local and school-based experiences at key stage 1 through local, regional and UK topics at key stage 2 to a much more widely based geography involving study at local, regional, other national, international and global scales at key stages 3 and 4. It even began to allocate suitable topics to each age group, using criteria (or what Bennetts, 2005, calls 'dimensions of understanding') such as increasing depth and breadth of study to make the choices. This was a sound beginning for thinking about curriculum progression. Indeed the section on progression in the Geography Working Group's report (1989) is still a useful summary of points to consider and is repeated here.

Progression may be recognized in relation to:

- Increasing breadth of study
- Wider range of scales studied
- Greater complexity of phenomena studied
- Increasing use made of generalized knowledge and abstract ideas
- Greater precision required in undertaking intellectual and practical tasks
- More mature awareness and understanding of issues and of the context of differing attitudes and values within which they arise.

However, because the relationship between curriculum and assessment was not understood, all this got lost in the immense detail of overlapping topics planned for the National Curriculum published in 1991. As a result any clear line of progression was lost and by the late 1990s the National Curriculum, as taught, was characterised by considerable unnecessary overlap of content. In particular, popular topics like rivers and rainforests seemed to appear in every key stage without any clear view of how the teaching or the topics might differ. Pupils frequently felt that they'd 'already done this!'

In his article entitled '[The Links Between Understanding, Progression and Assessment in the Secondary Geography Curriculum](#)', Bennetts (2005) presents a useful discussion of the difficulties of maintaining continuity in the broad topics covered whilst, at the same time, ensuring a sequence of content and skills appropriate to the capabilities of pupils.

Activity 10 - Progression from KS3 to GCSE

In this activity students, using Bennett's ideas, consider the differences between teaching a topic at KS3 and KS4.

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One way of holding in mind a broad view of curriculum progression through the key stages is to outline the character and intentions of each key stage. So, for example, one suggestion would be:

Key Stage 1 – is about establishing the foundations for learning, predominantly using pupil's personal, family and local experiences as the starting points for geography

Key Stage 2 – is about moving out to new challenges drawing on the wider local, regional, national and overseas experiences of pupils and introducing some of the traditional areas of geography such as physical, human and environmental.

Key Stage 3 - is about building confidence, capability and inspiration by ensuring a sound introduction to the basic content, methods and skills of geography, but at the same time ensuring that pupils are inspired and enthused by the subject and its relevance to their lives.

Key Stage 4 – is about promoting participation, citizenship and new possibilities by emphasising the contribution and value of geography to pupils as they seek to understand and participate as young citizens in the world around them.

Post-16 (KS5) - is about ensuring opportunities for specialism and scholarship by providing sufficient depth and breadth of geographical study for students to have access to important ideas and approaches in the subject and to have the opportunity to undertake substantive critical analysis.

These descriptions do not tell you what content to teach but they do provide a broad but clear focus for differentiating between the key stages and a guide to choosing appropriate content. You may find this a helpful way of thinking when planning your key stage 3 curriculum.

[Figure 8](#) presents a progression map produced by an 11-16 school involved in teaching the pilot GCSE in 2004-05 (now adapted as OCR 'B'). The school has attempted to map out a broad overview of how KS4/GCSE will build on KS3 and on KS2 (from information from feeder schools). The headings of scale of study, content focus, concepts highlighted and enquiry activity have been used.

Ideally some kind of progression statement should underlie all the national frameworks. In practice, the timing of the 14-19 review, with A level being reviewed before GCSE, made this difficult. However, with the greater flexibility at KS3, there is no reason why your geography department cannot map out its selection of GCSE and AS/A level content and ensure a coherent progression from KS3.

Activity 11 - Creating a progression map

In this activity students consider a document which maps out progression and relate it to their own experiences.

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Progression in relation to pupils

Relates to setting out of the key features of the kind of performance we expect to see in a pupil's work as she/he makes progress in geography i.e. the outcomes of teaching and learning. Progress will be seen as pupils demonstrate these features at increasing levels of achievement. The level descriptions are this kind of statement. They explain, for example, how pupils can be seen to make progress from level 4 to level 5 if they move from 'understanding that people can both damage and improve the environment' (4) to 'understanding some ways that human activities cause environments to change' (5).

Much attention has been given to outcomes over the last 20 years and there are numerous examples of outcomes-based performance descriptions. We have the level descriptions themselves, the expectations given in schemes of work, the GCSE and A level grade criteria and a range of mark schemes and criteria for specific units of work. These are all different kinds of instrument produced for different purposes. Strangely, perhaps, despite (or perhaps because of) all this activity, there remains a considerable amount of misunderstanding about what all these items are and how we should use them. Top of the list in this respect are the level descriptions, which were clearly written as broadly-based descriptions meant to be applied only in a best-fit way at the end of the key stage course. The paper 'Progression and Assessment' in Geography at KS3 by Rawling and Westaway (1996), then Geography Officers with QCA, provides a discussion and practical examples of the intended use of level descriptions at KS3, which is still relevant in 2009-10. Despite the intentions, level descriptions are now frequently used as termly grading instruments or, worse, as marking criteria for individual items.

[Figure 9](#) sets out one way of distinguishing all these different outcomes-based statements and descriptions. They are best viewed in a hierarchy.

Subject-specific. At the top of the hierarchy should be an agreed understanding of the nature of the subject and its contribution to 3-19 education. To some extent, the 'importance of geography' statement in the new KS3 PoS is attempting to do this. Although it is written with KS3 in mind, it

could be developed as a more general statement relevant to all phases and levels of education.

Phase specific. Next down would be the kind of broad progression framework or statement relating to and describing the characteristics of a broad curriculum area or phase – so, for example, the higher education [benchmark statement](#) for undergraduate geography is a good example. The benchmark statement is described as 'providing a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent 'general expectations about standards' (Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) definition). For example, a typical student should be able to 'demonstrate comprehension of the nature of change within human environments' and 'illustrate and discuss the contested and provisional nature of knowledge and understanding'.

The new A level and GCSE subject criteria are also phase-specific statements, though they are very minimal and leave a lot of flexibility. Such broad frameworks should help in ensuring some degree of standardisation about what is expected in geography at this level, as courses are prepared.

Course/curriculum-specific. Below this lie expectations of performance for a particular course or curriculum. The level descriptions are the best example of this, meant to describe performance in relation to the whole 5-14 curriculum. The level descriptions are described in the 1999 programme of study as 'providing the basis for making judgments about pupils' performance at the end of key stages 1, 2, and 3.' A level performance descriptions and GCSE grade criteria are another example. Course specific expectations are aids to recognising and comparing pupils' performance across the teaching and learning community.

Topic-specific. Performance criteria or expectations written to relate to a particular topic are a more detailed form of pupil outcome. The expectations in the DfES/QCA scheme of work are examples of these. Such expectations assist teachers in recognising and awarding achievement with respect to work on a particular topic. For example, the expectation for typical performance in relation to Geography Unit 12, Images of a Country, is that most pupils 'will describe and explain that a text/image does not show the complete picture; use a variety of methods to interpret images (e.g. Development Compass Rose, DCR); suggest relevant geographical questions using the DCR; identify positive and negative images of their own locality and of Brazil and explain their views; accurately use the terms stereotype and sustainable development; recognise how they might improve their observational skills'.

Task-specific. There are criteria or mark schemes developed for particular tasks or test items. These serve to standardise the awarding of marks in relation to a specific task or activity. Sometimes these are level-related or banded mark schemes. For example, a question in one of the pilot GCSE Geography examinations was focused on the process of landscape formation. The mark scheme gave examiners some suggestions of the detailed points to give credit for but also provided a three level scheme:

- Level 1 - one or two basic statements. Lacks knowledge and understanding beyond basics (award 1-3 marks)
- Level 2 - some knowledge of features and basic idea about formation. Lacks terminology and range (award 4-6 marks)
- level 3 - Sound knowledge and understanding of physical processes in the landscape with named features. Effective use of terminology. (award 7-8 marks).

The assessment tasks for the optional units of the pilot GCSE are also marked according to level-related descriptions.

Pupil-specific. Finally, if appropriate, a teacher could also provide performance statements focused on individual pupils and these might help to personalise the learning by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an individual pupil with a view to providing assistance.

Activity 12 - Progression and level descriptions In this activity students study outcome statements for GCSE and A Level specifications and also apply the National Curriculum Level descriptions to examples of students' work.

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Making Progress in Geography

Finally, [Figure 10](#) is a more diagrammatic and dynamic way of envisaging progression which brings together elements of all three approaches to progression considered above. It is intended to show how, through study of chosen content using a geographical enquiry approach and skills (the teaching and learning experiences provided), pupils move towards understanding of the key concepts (representing the inherent structure of the subject). The shape of the diagram draws attention to the gradually widening base of students' experience of places, themes, issues and scales of enquiry. The reference to levels highlights the outcomes expected of pupils as set out in the level descriptions.

Activity 13 - Using a diagram to plan for progression

In this activity students evaluate the extent to which a planning diagram can help them plan for progression.

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A thorough understanding of the term 'progression' is fundamental to curriculum development, because it lies at the heart of knowing the subject, making decisions about sequencing content, providing suitable teaching/learning experiences and recognising appropriate levels of achievement for pupils.

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