

Signposting additional curriculum sequences

Market engagement

March 2024

Introduction

Oak's purpose is to improve pupil outcomes and close the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and pupils to access, a high-quality curriculum.

We are currently working with a diverse range of partners to share their curriculum sequences and resources to support this. Our approach deliberately draws existing expertise from schools, publishers, subject associations and other curriculum organisations. We then share this back to teachers, via our free online products, in an easy-to-access format that they can choose to use to develop their own work. Our approach has strong evidence of reducing planning workload and improving curriculum expertise.

Through our initial partnerships, we've so far launched new model curriculum sequences in primary and secondary maths, English, science and history, in primary geography and in secondary music. We are now rolling out resources mapped to these curricula. We'll shortly start working with more partners to provide high-quality models for all other national curriculum subjects.

Models are hugely valuable to teachers. They show you what theory looks like in practice. Yet we know that one model per subject is not enough. Seeing more than one helps teachers identify common approaches or deliberate differences.

We also know the work we do with our partners is only a fraction of the expertise that exists in schools and organisations. We, therefore, want to consider how best we may support teachers to explore and learn from other model curriculum sequences.

We have started to develop plans to signpost additional curriculum sequences from Oak's online products. In this document, we have outlined some considerations and a number of high-level options for how we might approach this.

To help inform these plans, we would now like to hear from:

- Teachers and schools
- Providers of curriculum sequences (both commercial and non-commercial)

You can respond to the below information [by completing this survey](#). The survey will close at 5pm on Friday 12th April 2024.

If you have specific additional questions you can contact signposting@thenational.academy.

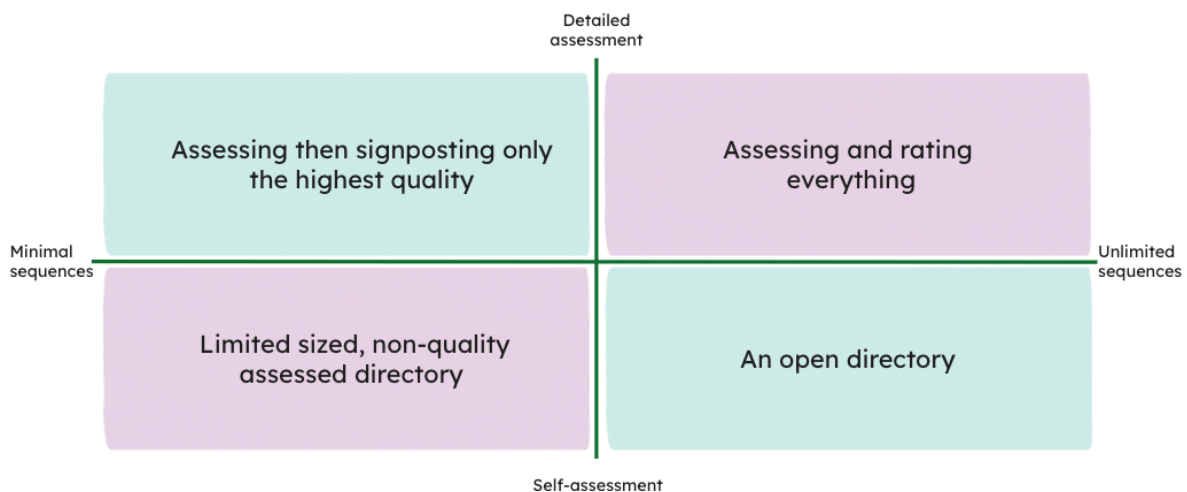
Approach

As we design our approach, we are considering a number of factors. Some guiding principles will include:

- We will signpost to full curriculum sequences, not individual or sets of resources.
- Sequences will need to cover a minimum of one key stage and, if in key stage four, be aligned with at least one exam specification.
- We'll provide links to other providers' websites to allow teachers to fully explore the sequences. This will include links to both free and commercial offers. Teachers will not be able to purchase sequences or resources from others directly on our platform but will be able to do so on providers' own sites.
- As this is a new approach we propose to trial it in one or a small number of subjects - this will allow us to assess the interest, test our process to ensure it works for providers, and, ultimately, gain feedback to make sure we are creating something of value to teachers.
- The initial trial will include maths, as a minimum. We seek views on other subjects in the first phase below.
- There will be a window for providers to submit their sequences. Sequences would then be signposted for a set period (e.g. three years).
- Following this market engagement, we will design our initial trial. We expect to launch the first opportunity for submission at the start of the 2024/25 academic year.

At the highest level, any option will need to balance between:

- **The number of sequences we signpost to per subject:** We want to support teachers to see a range of high-quality sequences. We could choose to limit this number to support teachers to compare adequately but not be overwhelmed. Alternatively, Oak could host a much greater number of sequences (e.g. more of a directory). There also needs to be consideration of the variance by subject. Our experience to date has shown that there are more public sequences on offer in some subjects compared to others.
- **The level of quality assessment:** To support the sharing of quality models for teachers, Oak could robustly check each curriculum sequence. Alternatively, there could be a simpler assessment, which is more technical and/or is mostly self-assessment.



It is not within the remit set for Oak by the Department for Education to complete a detailed assessment and list every curriculum provider in the market (i.e. become a rating service in the top right quadrant). Similarly, Oak's fixed capacity means that we are not able to do this. Any approach will need to be considered against this capacity. We also do not believe it is viable to have a fully self-assessed directory with limited size (i.e. bottom left quadrant). We've therefore proposed models that sit in the above two green quadrants.

High-level models

There are a range of different approaches we could take. We have outlined some high-level options below and would welcome views on preferred models.

Option 1 - A self-assessed directory

In this model, there would be a set of criteria that providers would need to show they meet in order to be listed. This would be mostly self-assessed. All those who passed the assessment would be listed. Given the self-assessment nature and potential high numbers of sequences, this would be a simple directory, with providers' names listed and links to additional offers. Self-assessment questions could, for example, include

- Does your sequence meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study in your subject?
- If covering key stage four, does your sequence meet the full specification of at least one exam board?
- Has your sequence been used in five UK schools for at least three years?

All potential providers (in all options) would also need to complete and pass a compliance assessment. This would be a lighter touch version of a [Standard Selection Questionnaire \(SSQ\)](#), modified for smaller curriculum organisations and schools, whilst assuring financial governance and details of persons with significant control.

Option 2 - Threshold-led assessment

This approach would build on option one, but introduce higher thresholds for assessment. This would cover more detailed quality indicators, with potential providers assessing if, for example, their curriculum is aligned to relevant non-statutory guidance, whether it is supported by available teaching resources or whether the sequence has had any published evaluation. More details of potential assessment areas are outlined in the considerations section below.

Providers would not need to pass every measure, each would contribute differently to a score, with a minimum total score being required. This would be mostly self-assessed but with checks completed on submission.

In addition, providers would also need to complete more detailed qualitative information about the design principles of their curriculum. For example, what are the principles that underpin how the curriculum is sequenced? These would be published but not assessed.

Those who meet the threshold will be signposted on the Oak platform, alongside:

- A scorecard of features - e.g. whether they have accompanying resources or not, whether they have an independent evaluation, how many schools the sequence is used in etc.
- Their qualitative information - e.g. their curriculum organising principles.

Given this more detailed assessment and information, we would expect fewer sequences to be listed.

Option 3 - Detailed assessment, limited number signposted

To ensure signposting to the highest quality sequences for teachers, this approach would require all submissions to be fully assessed against published criteria. Only a small number (e.g. three) additional sequences would be published in each subject. This would allow teachers to compare adequately different approaches and they would therefore have more detailed information on Oak's platform.

As above, a scorecard of the assessment would be published, alongside qualitative information from the provider on the organising principles of the curriculum.

Examples of the types of assessment criteria that could be used include:

- Has the provider clearly articulated a set of design principles and shown how the curriculum practically enacts these?
- Has the provider shown how the curriculum addresses generic and subject-specific research findings (e.g. from EEF guidance reports, Ofsted Research Reviews & subject-specific research, etc.)?
- Does the curriculum appropriately address specific elements that arise from the nature of the subject (e.g. use of calculators in maths, fieldwork in geography, science practicals, reading in English, variety of instruments in music, etc.)?

More details of potential assessment areas are outlined in the considerations section below.

Option 4 - a phased approach

This approach would see an initial lighter touch process, such as those listed in options one and two. This would enable additional sequences to be signposted on Oak's platform faster. Those listed could then submit for a more detailed assessment (such as in option three). A limited number who score the highest would then receive a higher profile and have more detailed information on Oak's platform.

Considerations

Within and across the different models, there are a number of other considerations we would welcome views on to inform our final approach.

1. What number of additional curricula should we signpost to in each subject?

Should this be unlimited, leading towards a lighter touch directory, or a limited number, each with greater information and transparency about quality features?

If limited, is a maximum of three additional sequences in each subject suitable to balance breadth without overwhelming teachers? Or should this change by subject, as we know there is more choice in some subjects.

2. If a threshold approach (Option 2) is taken, what parameters and criteria should we use for assessment?

We'd welcome views on the suggested following areas:

- **Coverage:**
 - What key stages does the curriculum sequence cover? (coverage of one key stage would be a proposed minimum requirement).
- **Usage and Impact:**
 - What evidence is there of current usage and impact in schools in England? (use in a minimum of five schools for three years would be a proposed minimum requirement)
 - Is there any external evidence of progression or outcomes from students following the curriculum (e.g. changes in exam/SAT scores)?
 - Has the sequence had any independent and external evaluation, comparing impact across different schools?
- **Curriculum Resourcing and Cost:**
 - Is the curriculum sequence supported by available teaching resources to support implementation in a school (whether free or available to purchase)?
 - Is the curriculum sequence supported by training to support implementation in a school?
 - Is your curriculum sequence available for free or at a cost to schools? (non-scoring, but shared for information to teachers)
 - Are any supporting teaching resources available for free or at a cost to schools? (non-scoring, but shared for information to teachers)
- **Licencing and Copyright**
 - What licence is your sequence published on?
 - Do you hold the relevant copyright permission for all content included, and what is your quality assurance process?
- **Alignment to statutory and non-statutory requirements and exam boards:**
 - To what extent does the curriculum sequence align with the National Curriculum programme of study both in terms of aims and content, and if it deviates from this, how and why?
 - Does the curriculum align with any other statutory requirements or guidance?
 - Does the curriculum align with any relevant published non-statutory guidance, e.g. 'Mathematics guidance: key stages 1-3'?
 - Does the curriculum align with the specification of at least one English exam board for KS4? This would be a proposed minimum requirement where relevant.

- **Organising Principles** (potentially not scored but used to provide additional information to teachers):
 - What are the subject principles and/or themes that underpin how the curriculum is organised in the subject, and the specific selection and sequencing of content (e.g. topics, units, texts) within the curriculum?
 - How have these been informed by research and evidence?
- **Accessibility and Diversity:** (potentially not scored but used to provide additional information to teachers)
 - Does your website, curricula and any associated resources meet the [WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standard](#) and can you provide evidence of audit?
 - How is your curriculum designed to be accessible to all pupils?
 - How does your curriculum demonstrate a commitment to diversity (including content, language, texts and media)?

3. If a detailed assessment (option 3) is taken, what areas should we assess?

Under this approach, we'd propose to use similar threshold criteria listed above on 'Coverage', 'Usage and Impact', 'Curriculum Resourcing and Cost' and 'Licencing and Copyright'.

The questions for 'Alignment to statutory and non-statutory requirements and exam boards', 'Organising Principles' and 'Accessibility and Diversity' would be switched to qualitative assessments, where providers would give greater depth of explanation, which could then be assessed. For example:

- Has the provider clearly articulated a set of design principles and shown how the curriculum practically enacts these?
- Has the provider shown thoughtful and evidence-informed consideration of what content is included or excluded from the curriculum?
- Has the provider shown how the curriculum addresses generic and subject-specific research findings (e.g. from EEF guidance reports, Ofsted Research Reviews & subject-specific research, etc.)?
- Does the curriculum appropriately address specific elements that arise from the nature of the subject (e.g. use of calculators in maths, fieldwork in geography, science practicals, reading in English, variety of instruments in music, etc.)?

We'd welcome views on this suggested approach and assessment areas.

In addition, should the assessment criteria be judged against [Oak's curriculum principles](#) and [subject principles](#)? Or should we lean towards different criteria in order to promote different curriculum approaches?

4. Who should complete an assessment?

Where any form of qualitative assessment is done on sequences, who should complete this? This could, for example, be completed by:

- Oak's in-house curriculum experts, who have expertise in all national curriculum subjects
- Members of Oak's existing subject expert groups (comprised of notable experts in their subject community and teachers selected via an open and blind-screened process). They would be paid for their time.
- An alternative organisation

5. Do you agree with a proposed three-year limit?

We propose that all successful sequences be signposted for a three-year period, before requiring some form of re-assessment. There would also be criteria for early removal if deemed necessary.

6. Which subjects should we initially trial this approach in?

The initial trial will include maths as a minimum. We seek views on potential other subjects in the first phase. Options include:

- Maths only
- English, maths and science
- Maths plus another subject(s) from our first cycle: English, science, history, primary geography and secondary music.

Annex

Oak's curriculum principles

- Sequenced and coherent
- Flexible
- Accessible
- Diverse
- Evidence informed
- Knowledge and vocabulary rich

Further information on our approach to curriculum [can be found online](#).

Oak's subject-specific principles

Further information on our approach to each subject [can be found online](#) by selecting a subject and phase and then clicking the 'Overview' tab.

English

- Pupils regularly read a range of text types as a group and independently, have frequent opportunities to develop personal responses to texts, and build their background knowledge, tier 2 vocabulary and fluency to support comprehension.
- Writing for a range of purposes, expressing creativity and building writing stamina are developed alongside a deep understanding of grammar, sentence construction, disciplinary writing and underlying spelling patterns.
- Frequent opportunities to develop the components of spoken language are included throughout the curriculum, and each lesson gives pupils multiple opportunities to talk and express their opinion.
- Text choice represents a diverse range of voices, backgrounds and cultures so the curriculum provides windows and mirrors to all pupils.
- There is a single tier of resources that is ambitious for all pupils by offering a low floor and high ceiling in each lesson.

Maths

- Pairing procedural knowledge with conceptual understanding
- Aligning with the Concrete Pictorial Abstract approach to mathematics teaching and learning
- Use an agreed set of models and representations which bridge mathematical concepts
- Use of variation theory in practice tasks and modelling

Science

- There will be a focus on building knowledge of key concepts in a way that reflects how knowledge is organised in the three scientific disciplines.
- Content will pair substantive and disciplinary knowledge particularly around practical work.
- Lessons will use a 'big ideas' approach to developing subject concepts.

- Where there is a practical focus, it builds knowledge through the use of carefully planned and purposeful practical activities.
- Where maths is taught or used in science, alignment with the sequence, language and approach used in the maths curriculum is considered.

History

- The overall selection and blend of content should match or exceed the ambition of the national curriculum for history, represent the diversity of the past and display responsiveness to evolving historical scholarship.
- Pupils' substantive and disciplinary journeys are shaped by rigorously historical enquiry questions, so that they can learn, systematically, to recognise and carry out differing types of historical argument, and so that medium-term analytic and narrative journeys are well-blended.
- The curriculum incrementally introduces a wide range of interpretations of the past, showing pupils how such interpretations arise and how they are constructed as well as their diverse forms, frameworks, origins and effects in the present.
- Historical narrative is used to secure coherence and retention, on micro and macro levels: from world-building and hinterland secured by rich stories in individual lessons to seeing possible temporal and spatial relationships between societies, civilisations, trends and contrasts, across time.

Geography

- Focuses on the knowledge and skills specific to geography, including:
 - World knowledge (encompassing locational, place, environmental, physical and human processes) developed through thematic and place-based studies at a range of scales;
 - How geographical knowledge originates and is revised.
- Develops pupils' knowledge and application of geographical investigation skills, including:
 - Using maps, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), spatial statistics, aerial and satellite imagery;
 - Using the fieldwork enquiry process and associated data collection, presentation and analysis techniques.
- Develops understanding of contemporary geographical debates and real world challenges through organising, connecting and applying what they have been taught.

Music

- Develops pupils as musicians through performing, engaged listening, composing and improvising
- Develops understanding of the elements of music and how these elements combine expressively through their application in sound
- Sequences learning over time which:
 - Builds musical knowledge, techniques and specialist language
 - Promotes the understanding of a diverse range of genres, traditions and styles
 - Develops pupils analytical skills in responding to different types of music
- Promotes co-curricular learning for all pupils through signposting to opportunities beyond the classroom.