

## A Guide to Curriculum Development

For use by curriculum panels appointed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Issued by the Ministry of Education and Research November 2011.

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ARTIKKEL | SIST ENDRET: 26.09.2016

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### Introduction

This Guide to Curriculum Development describes the core principles of the LK06 national curriculum along with key terminology and central aspects of the curriculum. The guide is based on White Paper no. 30 (2003–2004) Culture for Learning; Recommendation no. 268 (2003–2004) Recommendation by the Standing Committee on Education, Research and Church Affairs regarding Culture for Learning; and on parliamentary deliberations over that recommendation.

The document provides a set of general guidelines and should be used as a tool and point of reference when developing subject curricula, including regulations on final assessments.

Subject curricula are enshrined as statutory regulations, and they contain mandatory attainment targets describing what is expected of pupils across the country in each subject. Core skills are incorporated into the attainment targets.

The subject curriculum should be worded to facilitate dialogue between everyone involved in education (pupils – teachers – parents/guardians – school leaders – school owners).

Relevant governing documents such as white papers and recommendations to the Storting as well as laws and regulations addressing the national curriculum must be observed when developing or revising the subject curriculum.

### Key definitions

Key definitions used in the Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion are described here.

## **Attainment**

The Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion defines attainment as the ability to solve problems and master complex challenges. Pupils demonstrate their attainment in specific situations by applying their knowledge and skills when solving problems.

## **Attainment targets**

The attainment targets describe what the pupils should be able to master after completing a given year of study.

The combined attainment targets form the basis for assessing the pupils' attainment in the subject. The pupils will reach the attainment targets to varying degrees.

## **Core skills**

Core skills are part of the pupils' attainment in a subject. These skills are also essential tools for learning and development. The pupils must develop core skills in order to demonstrate their attainment in the subject.

These core skills are prerequisites for learning and development in school, work and society.

One key premise for the Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion is the integration of the following five core skills into the individual subject curricula: reading, numeracy, writing, oral skills and digital skills.

The core skills have been incorporated into the attainment targets for each subject. They are expressed in different ways and to varying degrees depending on the nature and objectives of each subject. The curriculum panel should consider which skills to incorporate into the subject curriculum and how this should be done.

## **The national primary and secondary curriculum**

The national primary and secondary curriculum comprises the following elements:

- The Core Curriculum
- The Quality Framework
- Distribution of teaching hours per subject in primary and secondary education
- Subject curricula

**The Core Curriculum** is a national governing document describing the fundamental values, cultural elements and learning objectives of primary and secondary education. The Core Curriculum is enshrined in Section 1-2 of the Education Act. It is of relevance to anyone responsible for planning and providing education as well as to parents/guardians and wider society. Individual subject curricula should be developed in line with the Core

Curriculum in such a way that the classroom tuition reflects its core values.

**The Quality Framework** applies to all subjects in every year of primary and secondary education, and it includes the Learning Poster. The framework outlines and elaborates on the provisions of the Education Act and its associated regulations, including the Core Curriculum. It is designed to help clarify school owners' responsibility for providing education in line with laws and regulations.

**The distribution of teaching hours** per subject in primary and secondary education is published in separate memoranda and provides a framework for developing subject curricula.

**Subject curricula** contain descriptions of objectives and main subject areas, definitions of core skills, attainment targets and regulations on final assessments. In order to emphasise the desired continuity, coherence and progression of primary and secondary education, subject curricula have been consolidated for the primary, lower and upper secondary stages wherever possible.

**The national curriculum** includes subject curricula for the primary and lower secondary stages, curricula for core subjects (subjects studied at the primary, lower and upper secondary stages), as well as programme subject curricula for both general and vocational study programmes at the upper secondary stage. The Ministry of Education and Research sets, and occasionally revises, the curricula for the primary and lower secondary stages and for core subjects. The Directorate for Education and Training is delegated the task of setting, and occasionally revising, the curricula for programme subjects at the upper secondary stage by the Ministry.

## Subject curriculum planning

The subject curricula comprise the following elements:

- Objectives
- Main subject areas
- Teaching hours
- Core skills
- Attainment targets
- Assessment

### Objectives

This element describes the objectives for the subject in respect of each individual pupil as well as the relevance of the subject in the context of work and society. The objectives describe how tuition in the subject contributes to the broader learning outcomes described in the Education Act, in the Core Curriculum and in the Quality Framework, including the Learning Poster. The objectives provide instruction and direction for tuition in the subject and describe how the subject contributes to the pupils' general development, how it is a stepping stone to further learning, and how it qualifies the pupils for participation in working life and society.

## **Main subject areas**

The main subject areas give structure to the subject and the curriculum and guidance on how the tuition could be organised.

Most curricula are divided into main subject areas for each year of study. When defining and describing main areas in a subject, the curriculum panel should aim to arrive at the most appropriate division and organisation of the subject. The main subject areas should combine to form a greater whole. The curriculum panel should also produce a brief description of each main subject area.

The need to divide subjects into main subject areas and the number of main subject areas will vary from subject to subject. Some subjects do not require division into separate main subject areas.

## **Core skills**

Each subject curriculum contains a summary of how working on the five core skills described in the Knowledge Promotion curriculum should help develop the pupils' overall attainment in the subject and how they form part of this attainment.

The core skills are indispensable tools for learning in each subject and necessary in order to allow the pupils to demonstrate their proficiency in the subject.

A framework has been developed for the five core skills. The framework defines the skills, outlines their function and describes the progression of each skill over five stages. The framework should be used as a tool and point of reference when developing subject curricula, and it should help highlight the core skills in relation to the objectives and nature of each subject.

## **Attainment targets**

The subject curricula describe the level of attainment that the pupils should reach in the subject. The attainment targets define what the pupils should master after completing a given year of study. The targets are usually set for the end of Years 2, 4, 7 and 10 of the primary and lower secondary stages. This means that Year 1 and 2 pupils are working towards the attainment targets at the end of Year 2. Attainment targets are set for each year of the upper secondary stage: Years 11, 12 and 13 (Vg1, Vg2 and Vg3).

The following principles should be applied when setting attainment targets:

### **The attainment targets describe what the pupils should be able to accomplish or master**

The attainment targets describe what the pupils should be able to master upon completing a year of study.

### **Attainment targets are set for each main subject area**

Attainment targets are set for each main subject area, which helps give structure to the pupils' attainment in

the subject. Together, the main subject areas and their associated attainment targets define the intended breadth of attainment in the subject.

In the case of curricula for core subjects, the advancement from compulsory education to upper secondary must be made clear in the form of progression in the attainment targets from one level to the next.

### **Core skills are incorporated into the attainment targets**

Attainment targets for core skills are integrated into the overall attainment targets specifically for each subject. This means that the skills should be expressed as a natural part of the pupils' attainment in the subject. For this reason the core skills are described differently and to varying degrees in each subject curriculum depending on how they are integrated into the subject and on the part that the skills play in the pupils' overall attainment in the subject.

### **Attainment targets are expressed in different ways for different subjects**

Attainment targets are expressed differently for different subjects. Some targets describe how to apply subject knowledge and are expressed using verbs such as create, use and explain. Other attainment targets concern how to develop an insight into the concepts and principles of a subject and are expressed using verbs such as reflect on and understand.

Attainment is defined as the ability to solve problems and master complex challenges in different situations. The attainment targets may therefore address knowledge, aspects of proficiency and issues surrounding attitudes in relation to the level of attainment that the pupils should achieve in the subject.

### **Specifying attainment targets is a local responsibility**

The attainment targets give schools the freedom to choose the content of the tuition, organise the tuition and choose their own working methods. The targets do not impose instructions with regard to methodology, except in curricula where methodology forms part of the attainment targets for the subject.

It must be possible to adapt the tuition to each pupil's personal circumstances, to groups of pupils, and to the local context. The attainment targets should therefore be designed in a way that provides room for practical and relevant learning and gives schools the freedom to decide how to organise the tuition in order to reach the targets.

When formulating attainment targets for core subjects in upper secondary, the curriculum panels must ensure that the wording allows the tuition given in these subjects to be adapted to the different study programmes.

### **The attainment targets form the basis for assessment**

The combined attainment targets are formulated to ensure that all pupils meet the targets, but with varying levels of attainment.

The basis for assessment in a subject is the combined attainment targets in the subject curriculum.

### **The attainment targets must provide a basis for dialogue**

The attainment targets are formulated to encourage co-operation and dialogue between all parties involved in the pupils' learning.

### **Regulations on final assessments**

The subject curricula contain regulations on final assessments in the subject. This includes the scheduling of coursework assessments and exams.

The objective of the final assessment is to obtain information about the pupils' attainment after completing their studies in the subject.

The basis for the final assessment in a subject is the combined attainment targets in the subject curriculum. The assessment should reflect the degree to which the attainment targets have been met.

The process of assessing the pupils is described in regulations separate from the curriculum, cf. Chapter 3 of the Regulations to the Education Act and the associated memorandum Udir-1-2010.

### **Attainment indicators**

Attainment indicators describe the quality of a pupil's attainment in relation to the overall attainment targets.

The process of developing subject curricula could also involve suggesting indicators of attainment in the subject.