

## NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS FOR SCOTLAND

### Purpose

1. To provide an update on the status of phase one of the national standardised assessments (Scottish National Standardised Assessments – SNSA – [redacted – out of scope] and progress in relation to the transition to phase two of project through a combined assessment platform.

### Priority

2. Routine

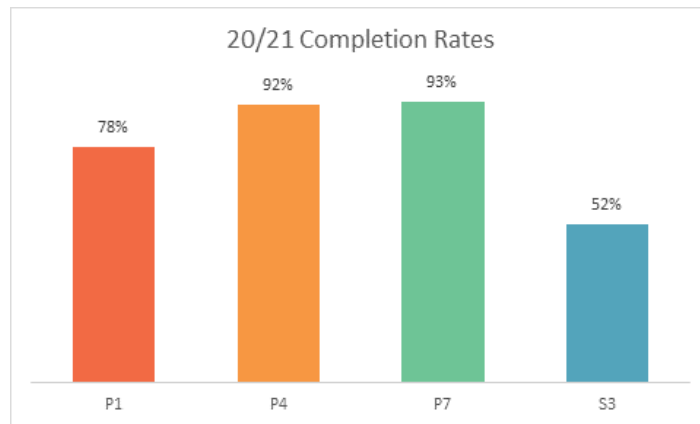
### Background: phase one services

3. The SNSAs form a key element of the National Improvement Framework and the Scottish Government’s commitment to reduce the poverty related attainment gap and raise attainment for all. Announced in the 2015 Programme for Government, and referenced in the 2016, 2017 [redacted – out of scope] PfGs, the SNSAs were rolled out to all publically funded Scottish schools in August 2016, [redacted – out of scope]

[redacted – out of scope]

4. With a few days remaining of term, SNSA sittings in the 2020/21 school year exceed 490,000 or 79% of the possible maximum (cf. 94% in 2017/18; 93% in 2018/19 and 41% in 2019/20 - unexpectedly foreshortened by school closures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic). This is slightly higher than anticipated given the move to remote learning in January to March: the assessments can only be taken in school. P4 and P7 rates are now within a few percentage points of what would have been expected in an uninterrupted year, while P1 rates are slightly depressed by local decisions in Fife (not to use SNSA for P1) and Glasgow (to devolve decision making on P1 presentations to headteachers) so are otherwise not much below “normal” expectation.

5. S3 rates have been particularly low throughout the year. This is possibly due to the challenges faced by secondary schools in delivering the alternative certification model, and latterly, the Deputy First Minister’s related decision that S3 ACEL data would not be collected for this year only, which may have impacted some practitioners’ views on the utility of the diagnostic information generated, albeit recognising that the assessments are intended to inform next steps in learning, as well as contribute to teachers’ professional judgements of learners’ progress. S3 completions have held up comparatively well throughout June, however, taking the completion rate over 50%.



6. [redacted – out of scope]

## Sensitivities

7. Considerable controversy has surrounded the national standardised assessments, largely based on a misunderstanding about their purpose. They are diagnostic assessments designed to support learning and teaching, not, as many have inferred, high-stakes tests for measuring system performance or accountability. Stakeholder, media and political criticism of the assessments, particularly for P1s, culminated in a parliamentary vote to abolish P1 assessments in September 2018 which in turn led to the Deputy First Minister commissioning the Independent Reedy Review into P1 assessments. The review concluded that P1 assessments had valuable potential and should be continued, albeit with the introduction of some important changes and enhanced training and support materials.

8. Despite the Independent Review findings, high completion rates over the last four years (as above), and increasing evidence from stakeholder discussions and the SNSA staff survey of how useful practitioners find the assessments, national standardised assessments remain a sensitive issue, as demonstrated by the questions received on this in response to the OECD report.

[redacted – out of scope]

9. The key principles/success criteria for the transition to phase two are as follows:

- National standardised assessments for Scotland remain a key element of our improvement agenda, as part of the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education.
- In response to clear demands from end users and stakeholders, our requirement for phase two focuses on securing continuity of core service provision; and enabling teachers to analyse learner progress against phase one SNSA outcomes.
- [redacted – out of scope]
- During phase two delivery we want to see greater efficiencies and consistency of provision across the two existing assessment sets (SNSA and MCNG).
- The establishment of a combined platform through which each assessment set will be accessed will bring the following benefits:
  - One interface for practitioners to navigate/familiarise themselves with
  - One set of training materials
  - Consistent reporting formats and information
  - A consistent approach to standardisation

[redacted – out of scope]

10. One of the key success criteria for phase two – identified by service users and local authorities during our consultation discussions ahead of publishing the Invitation to tender – is the continuity of user experience and ability to secure longitudinal value from phase one outcomes (i.e. for practitioners to be able to make valid comparisons between phase one and phase two outcomes, in terms of learner progress) – through a reasonable equivalence of approach to standardised outcomes.

[redacted – out of scope]

## Conclusion

11. The Cabinet Secretary is asked to note the update on national standardised assessments, and in particular:

- The encouraging completion rates for standardised assessments this year, despite the challenges of school closures and resulting educational recovery issues – suggesting practitioners see the value of the diagnostic information they generate.

[redacted – out of scope]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Learning: Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing

Mobile: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

June 2021

1. Copy List:	2. or Action	3. or Comments	4. For Information		
			5. Portfolio Interest	6. Constit Interest	7. General Awareness
8. First Minister 9. Minister for Children and Young People 10.	11.	12.	13. 14.	15.	16. X 17.

18. DG Education and Justice	31.
19. Graeme Logan, Director of Learning	32.
20. Gayle Gorman, CEO, Education Scotland	
21. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
22. Alison Taylor, DD Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing	
23. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
24. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
25. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
26. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
27. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
28. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
29. [Redacted s38(1)(b)]	
30.	