

Remote learning

Before Christmas 2020 the First Minister announced that most school pupils would learn remotely, rather than in school, until Monday 18 January 2021. On 4 January 2021 the First Minister confirmed that the Scottish Government had decided to extend this date and keep school buildings closed to the majority of pupils until 1 February 2021. This will be reviewed in mid-January. This change applies to all pupils, except vulnerable children and children of key workers. It includes nursery provision, as well as primary and secondary schools.

Local Authorities have already produced remote learning guidance and have shared this with schools to assist with planning and preparation for the current situation.

The following advice has been prepared by Education Scotland, in partnership with the Education Recovery Group, to support practitioners in leading remote learning in the coming weeks. The advice sets out shared understanding and expectations of what remote learning means for schools and settings across Scotland. Practitioners will be able to apply this understanding to their own specific context and use it as a basis for professional engagement and development.

Principles of Curriculum for Excellence

While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many things, our curriculum framework continues to apply. The core principles of Scotland's curriculum and the four fundamental capacities at its centre remain critical in putting learners at the heart of education.

From the outset of the pandemic, schools and settings adapted their learning and teaching to ensure a strong focus on children's mental health and well-being, and engagement. This continues to apply.

Individual settings and practitioners should seek to provide a curriculum that is adaptable and responsive to the full range of learners' needs, reflecting each school community's specific context.

A focus on promoting and developing skills that will increase children's and young people's skills in independent learning is a useful part of the remote learning approach.

What is remote learning?

Remote learning is learning that is **directed** by practitioners and **undertaken** by children and young people who are not physically with the practitioner while instruction is taking place.

Remote learning involves a combination of 'live' interactions between teacher and learners, and also learning which takes place away from the direct presence of the class teacher. It may involve a range of learning experiences which take place in a variety of learning spaces, including outdoors and includes active and physical learning.

Whilst remote learning is not a substitute for full time classroom based learning and teaching, effective remote learning can mitigate some of the adverse impact of a reduction in face-to-face learning and can offer learners:

- significant autonomy over their learning
- a degree of flexibility for learners in where and when they learn
- potential for high quality consolidation of learning
- opportunities to develop and improve their skills in working independently
- increased opportunities for personalisation in learning
- opportunities for improved engagement
- enhanced parental engagement in their child's learning away from school.

Remote learning can be delivered in a variety of ways. It may include reading, doing, creating and inventing, playing, problem solving, observing and investigating with some of the best learning examples not requiring technology at all, although in the current context, digital and online approaches will be commonly used.

Learners should not engage in online learning for the entirety of the school day. Learning may include activities such as research tasks, project work, practical opportunities, discussions and other activities that can be carried out away from a digital device.

It is expected that learning will include provision of opportunities to consolidate, extend and enhance learning to take account of and meet the needs of learners and their families. This may be accommodated by providing access to pre-recorded lessons, presentations, lesson notes, diagrams or links to useful websites.

School leaders have an important role in ensuring that all learners experience high quality learning experiences.

The involvement of a further range of partners, including community and third sector organisations to support remote provision has the potential to provide rich and varied learning experiences.

Key principles for remote learning include:

- remote learning will not replicate face to face in school teaching – in style, approach or hours of delivery
- class teacher retains responsibility for planning and organising children's and young people's learning, with learning supported by parents and carers
- opportunities for learners to progress and extend their learning
- approaches to assessment of learning and providing feedback that support and capture children's and young people's achievements in school and at home
- provision of learning activities to ensure engagement for all, considering the age and stage of development of learners, and introducing increasing opportunities for independent study as appropriate
- provision of learning activities for learners who require additional support for learning and any learners who may be particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged
- a shared understanding between home and school of the remote learning approach and the respective roles and responsibilities of all involved
- continued endeavours to tackle digital exclusion, including the provision of devices and connectivity solutions to support learning
- partnership working with community providers and third sector organisations to support provision.

In line with these key principles, children and young people are entitled to:

- learning opportunities which reflect the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, allowing learners to develop their knowledge, skills and attributes in a variety of relevant contexts and across curriculum areas
- access to appropriate physical resources where needed – this might include learning materials, textbooks and / or digital devices
- on-line resources that will be consistently used across learning to aid interaction, assessment and feedback
- regular high quality interactive learning and teaching using technology or other remote methods
- a balance of live learning and independent activity
- access to key learning which is available for learners to revisit as often as necessary
- ongoing dialogue, reflection and feedback with practitioners in relation to their own learning
- daily registration/check in for every learner, recognising that the format for this may vary depending on the age and stage of learners
- regular opportunities for engagement with other pupils to support learning, as well as informal engagement
- due regard for their well-being and safeguarding.

Support for remote learning

Education Scotland has curated into a single list all the support that is available on remote learning from national organisations. You can access the list of support using this [link](#).

Education Scotland and other bodies are working continuously to further improve the national remote learning offer and support available to you. As these become available, they will be included on the page which can be accessed through the above link.

The support available is summarised below.

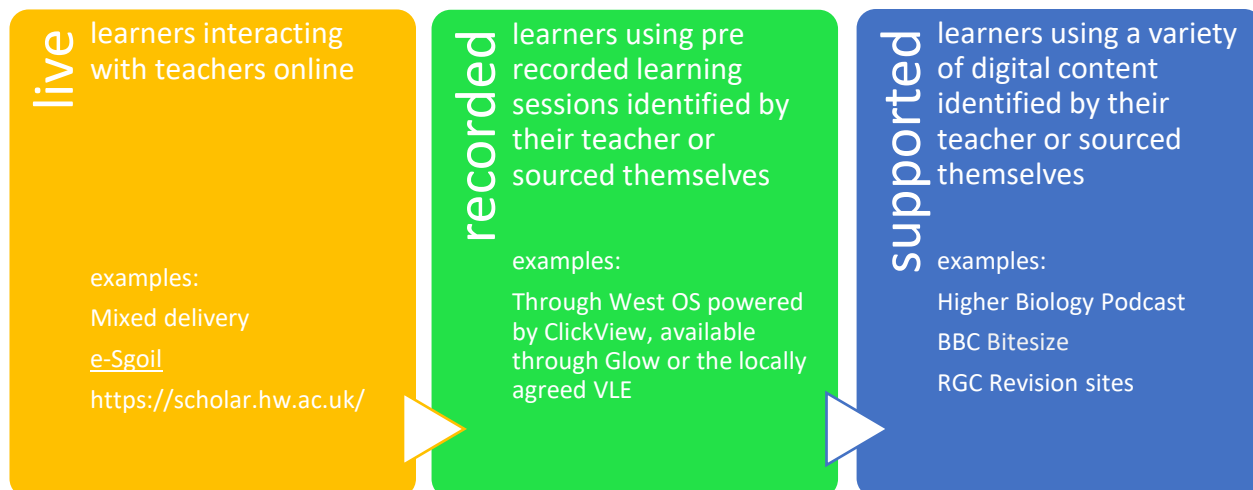
The National e-Learning Offer

The National e-Learning (NeLO) programme has been set up by the National e-Learning Partnership: Education Scotland, Scottish Government, the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) and eSgoil to support remote learning. All partners are working together to deliver a single offer that builds coherently on what is already available from schools, local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC). This offer is initially bringing together the **live** learning option from e-Sgoil, **recorded** content led by the West Partnership through the West Online School team and **supported** materials identified by practitioner networks and organised by Education Scotland.

The NeLO provides support for practitioners and learners in planning for remote learning and has the following objectives:

- Practitioners will be able to use the national e-learning offer, when needed, to complement and enhance e-learning support available locally and within the local authority and RIC to ensure that impact on a pupils' education is minimised
- Practitioners will be able to access a range of resources to use in their own delivery of remote learning.
- Schools will be able to use the national e-learning offer after the pandemic for other reasons such as the increase in the scope of senior phase curricular choices or to support pupils experiencing disrupted learning.

The three component parts of The National eLearning Offer:



Live

Following a request from CERG in August 2020, e-Sgoil <http://www.e-sgoil.com/> has developed a 3-18 offer for schools and centres to access as part of their remote learning plans. Schools should refer to the eSgoil website to see what is currently on offer.

Supported

Supported resources are currently available for:

Biology	Chemistry	Human Biology
Physics	Mathematics	Applications of Mathematics
Computing	English	ESOL
Gaelic (Learners)	French	Mandarin (simplified)
German	Spanish	

These resources can be accessed through this single point of [access](#).

Recorded

This element provides pre-recorded lessons and linked activities with which young people can engage. This is being coordinated through the West Online School. Access to West OS requires access to be available to ClickView, which is enabled on a per local authority basis once the appropriate agreements are in place.

There is a tile in GLOW for these local authorities to access WestOS. There are currently approximately 500 videos, in various subjects, developed by teachers for practitioners.

Accessing the NeLO

When practitioners are preparing lessons to support learners at home, they can access materials from both the Recorded and Supported links above to develop tasks and learning activities and share with learners via Glow (or the locally agreed Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)) to enhance their learning experiences.

For live sessions, practitioners and schools can contact e-Sgoil to arrange for learners to sign up to support the learning being offered by the school.

Additional sources of support

In addition to the NeLO there are a number of other sources of support for remote learning, including:

[Scotland Learns](#)

A range of ideas and suggestions of activities to help parents, carers and practitioners support learning at home.

[What Scotland Learned](#)

Examples of innovative practice from learners, parents and educators in Scotland during the first lockdown period March to August 2020.

[COVID-19 Education Recovery](#)

A single point of access to guidance and support for COVID-19 recovery. It includes key advice from the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG), and from sources approved by CERG.

[Strengthening Support for school staff](#)

Providing access to a new package of support to support the wellbeing of school staff including support sessions and webinars, coaching and mentoring opportunities and enhanced support for recently qualified teachers.

[Professional Learning](#)

Providing access programmes of learning and a wide variety of online events covering a range of topics, including Curriculum support, DYW, Professional Learning, Inclusion and data analysis.

Glow

Glow is Scotland's nationally available digital platform. It provides free access for all learners and teachers to online tools such as Microsoft Office 365, Google G-Suite for Education and WordPress Blogs.

Digilearn.scot

Providing a range of strategies, tools and guidance to support learning and teaching remotely.

SQA

SQA has a resource hub for the delivery of National Qualifications in 2021 where teachers can get access to the latest information and resources to support the delivery of qualifications this year.

GTCS

GTC Scotland has created and curated a variety of resources and advice to support practitioner health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis.

Advice for practitioners when planning remote learning

The [Refreshed Narrative for Curriculum for Excellence](#) is a practical tool that will support schools when planning for a remote learning approach with the four capacities remaining at the heart of learning. Focus on learning across literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing will be a continued priority with increasing learning experiences across the four contexts. Cross-curricular linked themes, interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and play-based approaches will enrich the curriculum and be a useful bridge between learning in different spaces.

Helpful advice for planning online aspects of learning can be found in [Education Scotland's Delivering Learning and Teaching Online](#) resource. As is always the case, the class teacher retains responsibility for planning, organising and delivering children's and young people's learning. Remote learning places different demands on the class teacher. It is important that the class teacher is supported in aspects of planning and delivery by schools, local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national bodies. Practitioners can access professional learning support around digital learning and teaching via [Education Scotland Digilearn.scot](#).

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) has published [Engaging online: A guide for teachers](#) which has been endorsed by the Teacher Professional Associations.

Organising Learning

A good starting point when planning for remote learning is to consider how you might organise learning in a typical classroom situation i.e. under 'normal' circumstances. Where, in a classroom setting, the practitioner is not working directly with a group of learners, what sort of activities would be planned for them and how would these be organised?

More specifically:

- Which elements of learning should be delivered via 'live learning'? Why?
- Which aspects of learning would be best suited to take place independently, rather than online? Why?
- What resources are available locally and nationally to support remote learning?
- Are there activities and learning that can be done prior to face-to-face sessions to help learners become familiar with the topic or concepts, using a flipped classroom approach? Are there activities and learning that can take place after the face-to-face sessions to deepen understanding, reinforce and consolidate learning? How can we ensure learners, parents/carers and other professionals know what is expected in learning beyond the school?
- What resources can be provided that will help learners to revisit, apply and deepen their learning?
- Can carefully planned inter-disciplinary learning challenges engage learners and enrich learning experiences?

When considering the above it will be important to ensure activities are appropriate to the age and stage of learners. [Realising the Ambition](#) encourages practitioners to consider learning spaces, interactions and experiences. The same considerations can be helpful when planning learning for older learners.

Personalised Learning

Just as in classroom learning, activities, support and resources to be used away from the school setting should be differentiated to meet the needs of learners. Where these offer the opportunity to build on, extend and apply previous classroom learning, this is likely to be more successful.

Challenges of remote learning

Effective use of remote learning offers both challenges and opportunities for practitioners, learners and parents.

Practitioners may only be able to work on a 'live' basis with a proportion of the class at any one time. Given this commitment to 'live' learning, time for practitioners to develop other aspects of remote learning is an important consideration.

We need to be mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people, many of whom may have suffered loss and trauma as a result. For all learners a key focus during this period of remote learning needs to be health and wellbeing. It will be essential that remote learning approaches reflect this.

It is important that, given the limited time with learners, a didactic teaching model does not become the norm. Practitioners should have access to professional learning opportunities which support them to understand and provide remote learning methodologies to ensure they are well equipped to support children's and young people's learning and achievements.

The move to remote learning may have a detrimental impact on progress in learning for some learners. Attention will need to be given to those learners who face disadvantage. Schools will need to carefully consider any steps which they can take to mitigate barriers to learning and engagement.

Practitioners will need to consider how they will plan most effectively for both the 'live' teaching and learning which they will deliver online and the learning that will take place remotely. Learners will need to adapt to these new circumstances which may require them to complete tasks prior to working directly with their teacher as well as following these interactions.

Parents and carers and remote learning

Parents and carers want the very best for their children. It is important to stress that, in a period of remote learning, parents and carers are not expected to be teachers and we understand that many will be juggling work and childcare. It is crucial that parents and carers are as certain as they can be about what remote learning is, what it means for their children and how they can continue to contribute positively and effectively to their children's learning. Good communication between home and school is essential. Parents and carers should receive information from the local authority and school regarding the plans they are putting in place, including access to online learning so they and their children know what to expect.

Conclusion

What constituted high quality learning, teaching and assessment prior to the pandemic and what constitutes high quality learning, teaching and assessment now has not changed. The professionalism of our workforce remains. We all remain

committed to children's rights and positive relationships. We want our learners to be eager participants in their learning. Learning should be motivating, meaningful and enjoyable. It should also be well matched to children's and young people's needs and interests. It still remains important that learners understand the purpose of their learning and that assessment remains integral to learning and teaching. What has changed is the way in which we are seeking to attain high quality experiences for our learners. It is vital that we continue to adjust and tailor our approaches to help ensure the very best for all of our learners.

The aim of everyone across Scottish education is that all learners can return to school buildings as soon as it is safe to do so. As we work towards this it is important to recognise the challenges of remote learning and how we address these. We also need to acknowledge that the challenges differ across stages and sectors.

It is important that we continue to build on the strong culture of collaboration that exists across Scotland, strengthening this to ensure there are opportunities for schools, local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and national bodies to work together to support remote learning.