



QQI

Quality and Qualifications Ireland
Dearbhú Cáilíochta agus Cáilíochtaí Éireann

WHITE PAPER

Draft Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers

FOR CONSULTATION

Submissions may be emailed to

international.education@qqi.ie

(please put 'QAGs ELE' in the subject field).

In your submission please clearly indicate:

1. *Your contact details.*
2. *Whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.*
3. *If you do not wish your submission to be published.*

The closing date for submissions is **16th December 2022**

This White Paper contains proposed Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers. Following publication and consideration of the outcomes of consultation, this paper will lead to further draft Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for English Language Education (ELE) Providers which will be proposed for adoption by the Board of QQI.

These QA guidelines for ELE will be supplemented by:

- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Higher Education to International Learners
- Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of English Language Education to International Learners
- Policy on Authorisation to Use the International Education Mark.

QQI is seeking feedback from stakeholders on the draft QA Guidelines for ELE contained in this White Paper.

SECTION 1: LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND.....	3
1.1 Background to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012	3
1.2 Statutory Codes of Practice.....	3
1.3 Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers.....	5
1.3.1 What is the purpose of the Statutory QA Guidelines for ELE Providers?	4
SECTION 2: STATUTORY QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROVIDERS	5
2.1 Organisational Structures.....	5
2.1.1 Organisational and administrative structures.....	5
2.1.2 Administrative staffing.....	5
2.1.3 Administrative systems	6
2.1.4 Communications.....	6
2.2 Management and Governance of Quality Assurance	6
2.2.1 Quality assurance systems.....	6
2.2.2 Quality assurance policies and procedures.....	7
2.2.3 Quality assurance reviews.....	8
2.3 Academic Management Structures.....	9
2.3.1 Qualifications and experience	9
2.3.2 Communications.....	9
2.3.3 Course development.....	9
2.3.4 Academic materials.....	9
2.3.5 Attendance at briefings and conferences.....	10
2.3.6 Operational academic management	10
2.3.7 Teaching and learning	10
2.3.8 Lesson planning	11
2.3.9 Lesson delivery	11
2.3.10 Online provision.....	12
2.3.11 Monitoring of lesson planning and delivery.....	12
2.4 Programme Design	13
2.4.1 Curriculum and syllabus design.....	13
2.4.2 Academic staff development	14
2.4.3 Assessment systems.....	14
2.5 Supports and Services for International Learners.....	16
2.5.1 Learner orientation and induction.....	16
2.5.2 Learners on study visas.....	17
2.5.3 Academic supports	18
2.5.4 Events programme	18
2.5.5 Exit procedures for enrolled learners	18

2.6 Staff Supports and Development	19
2.6.1 Induction procedures	19
2.6.2 Academic staff induction	20
2.6.3 Student social events staff induction.....	20
2.6.4 Staff training and development.....	20
2.6.5 Administrative staff training and development.....	20
2.6.6 Academic staff training and development.....	20
2.6.7 Sales and marketing staff training and development	21
2.6.8 Appraisals.....	21

Annex: Guidelines for ELE Providers on the Alignment of ELE Programmes to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)	22
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

1 Introduction	22
2 Background to the CEFR.....	23
3 Alignment of a curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR	26
4 Decisions to be made prior to starting the alignment process.....	28
5 Models of Alignment: Model A and Model B.....	30
Glossary of terms as used in these guidelines.....	40
References and further reading	41
Reference Tools	41
Appendix One: Questions to consider before starting the process of alignment.....	42
Appendix Two: Models A and B familiarisation example activities.....	43
Appendix Three: Model A specification example template	44
Appendix Four: Model A standardisation example.....	45
Appendix Five: Model B specification example	48
Appendix Six: Model B standardisation example.....	49

SECTION 1: LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

1.1 Background to the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established in November 2012 by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. The 2012 Act sets out the functions of QQI, which includes the establishment of a code of practice for the provision of programmes of education and training to international learners, and the authorisation of an international education mark (IEM).

The 2012 Act was amended by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019. References to the legislation hereafter will be to the 2012 Act as amended.

The 2012 Act as amended provides that QQI shall publish a code of practice in such form and manner as it thinks appropriate, and that it may include different provisions in respect of different providers or providers of different classes.

1.2 Statutory Codes of Practice

QQI policy is to establish and publish two codes of practice in respect of providers of different classes:

- one for higher education providers (HE Code)
- one for English language education providers (ELE Code).

The codes of practice are part of a suite of measures, provided for in the 2012 Act as amended, that are designed to protect the interests of international learners¹ who engage with the Irish education and training system. The purpose of the ELE Code is to ensure that international learners attending ELE institutions that have demonstrated their compliance with the ELE Code, and have obtained authorisation to use the IEM, receive a safe, high-quality and consistent learning experience.

Compliance with the ELE Code for the purpose of obtaining authorisation from QQI to use the IEM is required of ELE providers who recruit international learners in the State on ELE programmes. A provider's compliance with the ELE Code, and its authorised use of the IEM, will attest to the quality of the provider, the quality of its ELE programmes, and the quality of the learner experience on those programmes.

1.3 Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines for English Language Education Providers

This document outlines the Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines established by QQI for English language education providers. These guidelines are 'statutory': under the 2012 Act as amended, QQI

¹ Section 2(1) of the 2012 Act as amended defines an international learner 'as a person who is not an Irish citizen but is lawfully in the state primarily to receive education and training.'

This definition comprehends non-EU/EEA learners on study abroad programmes who require visa permissions. It is also recognised that there are significant numbers of international learners of English, both adults and juniors, who do not require visa permissions. As a result, regulatory requirements set out in the ELE Code will not apply to these categories of ELE provision. However, the principles and criteria set out in the ELE Code can, and should, also apply to all categories of ELE provision. In these and other relevant aspects, the ELE Code should be observed in relation to all international learners on study abroad programmes.

are required to publish quality assurance guidelines. The 2012 Act as amended requires providers to "have regard to" QQI's Quality Assurance guidelines when establishing their own quality assurance procedures. The principles underpinning these guidelines are set out in the [QQI Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines](#).

These Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for ELE Providers supplement the Core Quality Assurance guidelines, which are applicable to **all** providers, and they add to the core guidelines by addressing the more specific QA needs and requirements of ELE providers.

These QA Guidelines for ELE Providers should be read by ELE providers in conjunction with the ELE Code. They should also be read in conjunction with the QQI Policy on Statutory QA Guidelines and the following QQI Statutory QA Guidelines:

1. [Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for use by all Providers](#)
2. [Sector Specific Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines developed by QQI for Independent/Private Providers coming to QQI on a Voluntary Basis](#)

1.3.1 What is the purpose of the Statutory QA Guidelines for ELE Providers?

These guidelines address the responsibilities of English language education providers in the context of accessing the statutory and regulatory functions of QQI. These guidelines set out statutory, QA guidelines specific to ELE providers that come to QQI on a voluntary basis for the purpose of seeking authorisation to use the IEM. They are to be used by ELE providers, along with the ELE Code of Practice, when

- designing, implementing, and reviewing their quality assurance policies and procedures
- designing, implementing, and reviewing their curricula, syllabi and course programmes/schemes of work in alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

These guidelines are **not** intended to prescribe how ELE providers are to carry out their work or run their organisations, nor are they to be considered as a 'how to' manual for ELE providers on the establishment of their QA procedures. Rather, it is up to ELE providers to establish an internal quality system that is appropriate to their individual context and that incorporates operational QA procedures and a system of review to monitor the effectiveness of those procedures.

SECTION 2: STATUTORY QUALITY ASSURANCE GUIDELINES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROVIDERS

These guidelines comprise quality assurance criteria to be met by ELE providers under the following categories:

- Organisational Structures
- Management and Governance of Quality Assurance
- Academic Management Structures
- Programme Design
- Supports and Services for International Learners
- Staff Supports and Development

2.1 Organisational Structures

2.1.1 Organisational and administrative structures

- (a) There is a mission statement which may also describe the core values and objectives of the ELE provider.
- (b) The organisational chart supports the efficient operational management of the ELE provider in all areas of organisational, administrative, and academic management.
- (c) Organisational, administrative, and academic management structures are clear, transparent, appropriate to the size of the ELE provider, adaptable as required and are understandable by staff, learners, recruitment agents, partners and other key stakeholders.
- (d) Responsibilities and line management structures among members of administrative and academic management, and administrative and academic staff, are clear, transparent, efficient, and understandable by all staff.
- (e) Strategic organisational and operational planning is carried out periodically and supports the ELE provider's developmental and enhancement objectives.

2.1.2 Administrative staffing

- (a) The administrative staff profile meets the needs of the ELE provider and all administrative staff are suitably qualified/trained and/or experienced for their role.
- (b) Each centre(s), whether permanent, additional, summer or temporary, has its own administrative team in place, which is proportional to the current number of enrolled learners at the given centre during operational hours.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and appendix 4, for requirements regarding academic management staff)

2.1.3 Administrative systems

- (a) There is a management system in place to support effective administrative, enrolment and academic management operations, as well as management of internal monitoring and provision of required information, as needed. All members of staff are trained in the use of this system as relevant to their role.
- (b) Data management systems, including data on the school management system, are efficient and meet the needs of the ELE provider.

2.1.4 Communications

- (a) Communication channels among members of administrative and academic management, and administrative and academic staff, are clear, transparent, efficient, and understandable by all staff.
- (b) There is regular, documented communication among the management team(s) and between management, administrative and academic teams. Administrative and academic teams coordinate and communicate effectively.
- (c) Members of staff meet with their line manager periodically to discuss their role, performance and training and development needs, and to receive guidance and support, as needed, and these meetings are documented.

2.2 Management and Governance of Quality Assurance**2.2.1 Quality assurance systems**

- (a) ELE providers have quality assurance policies in place which inform the management and development of quality assurance procedures in all areas of the organisation.
- (b) There is a dedicated and suitably trained Quality Assurance Officer who is responsible for the development, embedding and management of provider quality assurance policies and procedures throughout the organisation, as well as the enhancement of ELE provision and associated services, as required and appropriate. The role of the Quality Assurance Officer may be part of another role of a member of staff. However, it is important to note that quality assurance development and management is also a part of the functions of all staff members, as relevant to their specific role, as well as to the whole organisation.
- (c) Quality assurance policies and procedures of the ELE provider are aligned with the mission and objectives of the provider and are developed, embedded and managed on a cross-organisational basis, with the involvement of relevant internal and external stakeholders.
- (d) Quality assurance policies and procedures are suitably and sustainably resourced to support operations, provision and all services offered by the ELE provider.

2.2.2 Quality assurance policies and procedures

- (a) ELE providers have quality assurance policies and procedures in place to ensure protection of key internal and external stakeholders and which support efficient operations and development.
- (b) Quality assurance policies include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (i) Corporate and academic governance
 - (ii) Management and operations
 - (iii) Environmental sustainability
 - (iv) Health and safety
 - (v) Pastoral care for learners and staff
 - (vi) Accommodation services, where offered
 - (vii) Modes of evaluation of provision, services, and conditions
 - (viii) Child protection
 - (ix) Human resources
 - (x) Staff welfare
 - (xi) Staff development
 - (xii) Equality, diversity, and inclusion
 - (xiii) Curriculum, syllabus, and programme design
 - (xiv) Complaints
 - (i) Grievances
 - (ii) Assessment framework
 - (iii) Award and certification services, where offered
 - (iv) Academic integrity
 - (v) Marketing and recruitment
 - (vi) Evaluation of provision and services.
- (a) Quality assurance procedures include, but are not limited to, areas such as:
 - (i) effective management of, and clear separation of functions of, corporate and academic governance
 - (ii) effective management of operations
 - (iii) effective management of quality assurance observations of teachers, teacher trainers, administrative staff and managers and social events coordinators
 - (iv) quality reviews of course programmes and materials
 - (v) internal and objective oversight of sales and marketing practices to ensure that

- they are aligned with the provider mission statement and objectives
 - recruitment of learners is conducted in a transparent and ethical manner for all stakeholders
 - the principles of the London Statement² are upheld
 - provider capacity in relation to premises and resources etc., is considered realistically
- (b) Quality assurance policies and procedures inform the need to make changes in the organisation in order to continue to develop and enhance ELE provision.
- (c) Provider quality assurance policies and procedures are designed in consultation with all members of staff involved in their design, implementation and management, and are updated and enhanced periodically and as needed.

2.2.3 Quality assurance reviews

- (a) Periodic self-assessments take place during which all areas of the organisation are reviewed and evaluated and following which, appropriate action is taken where needed to ensure the development and enhancement of quality.
- (b) ELE providers produce a monitoring report 18 months following the assessment of the provider's compliance with the ELE Code of Practice which describes provider activities, developments and enhancements for the current year and plans for the coming year. This report is submitted to QQI.
- (c) There are procedures in place which enable learners, staff and other stakeholders to evaluate the ELE provider. Feedback is varied in type and is gathered on areas such as, but not limited to:
- (i) premises and facilities
 - (ii) organisational management
 - (iii) ELE provision
 - (iv) accommodation, where offered by the provider
 - (v) events programme
 - (vi) other services offered
 - (vii) developments and enhancements
 - (viii) staff development and conditions
- (d) Data gathered from different types of evaluation and feedback are used to support decision-making regarding strategic organisational planning, development and enhancement and to inform the planning of future programmes.
- (e) If there is an issue, this should be dealt with immediately. For this reason, it is recommended that initial feedback is gathered from learners during the first week of the programme in order to resolve potential issues as soon as possible.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and Section 9, Marketing and Recruitment)

2 [london_statement.pdf \(britishcouncil.org\)](https://www.britishcouncil.org/london-statement.pdf)

2.3 Academic Management Structures

2.3.1 Qualifications and experience

The academic staff profile meets the needs of the organisation and all members of academic staff are suitably qualified, and experienced, where required, for their role.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and appendix four, for details on requirements for academic staff)

2.3.2 Communications

- (a) There is regular, documented communication among the academic management team and between academic management, trainers and teachers. Essential meeting types include, but are not limited to the following:
 - (i) regular academic administration meetings to confirm schedules and monitor learner attendance participation;
 - (ii) materials and resources selection, implementation and management;
 - (iii) curriculum, syllabus and schemes of work review and development;
 - (iv) formative and summative assessment framework review and development as well as regular CPD sessions for teachers and trainers. (As a guideline, it is recommended that CPD sessions be offered to teachers and trainers once a month.)
- b) There are systems in place to offer academic and mentoring support to teachers and trainers.

2.3.3 Course development

- (a) Considerations on new programme developments are discussed at corporate management and academic management level, with inputs from sales and marketing management as required, as well as possible considerations from external stakeholders, such as HE providers in Ireland.
- (b) All decisions regarding potential new programme developments are agreed with the academic governance committee.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and Section 7, Programme Design)
- (c) All decisions regarding new programme developments are made with regard to the capacity and capability of the ELE provider and business plans are agreed between corporate management and academic management to support decision making in each case.

2.3.4 Academic materials

- (a) Academic materials and resources for each existing or new programme are selected and updated to support teaching and learning needs, as well as new developments and practices.
- (b) A member(s) of staff is/are responsible for the management and curation of all academic materials and resources, and an annual budget is agreed.
- (c) All new academic materials and resources are approved by the Academic Governance Committee or the external expert.

2.3.5 Attendance at briefings and conferences

- (a) A member of the academic management staff attends scheduled QQI briefings.
- (b) A member(s) of the academic staff attends relevant training and development sessions and conferences in Ireland, and learnings are cascaded to colleagues in CPD sessions.
- (c) ELE providers sponsor academic staff members to attend events and conferences, and learnings are cascaded to colleagues in CPD sessions.

2.3.6 Operational academic management

- (a) There is an appropriate learner: teacher/teacher trainer ratio for all programmes to ensure participation opportunities on the part of the learners and effective classroom management on the part of teachers and teacher trainers.
- (b) The number of dedicated full-time academic managers per centre is proportional to the number of enrolled learners at the centre.
- (c) Teaching schedules of a maximum of thirty contact teaching hours per week are fully supported by well-designed curricula, syllabi, and schemes of work, which are closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
- (d) There is an effective system in place to substitute teachers and teacher trainers as required.
- (e) Academic managers are responsible for the monitoring of all academic administrative documentation, which is stored on the school management system.
- (f) Records of work completed in class are recorded in sufficient detail (i.e., to enable another teacher to understand what has been completed) on the management system and this is monitored by academic management staff. Follow-up work with teachers is completed when records are insufficient.
- (g) Compliance with copyright and other intellectual property rights legislation is monitored by academic managers.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 6, Operational, Risk and Human Resources Management, and appendix six, Resources for providers, for information regarding copyright laws.)

2.3.7 Teaching and learning

- (a) Teachers and teacher trainers plan and deliver ELE programmes in a learning environment that is appropriate and of a sufficient standard to facilitate learners' achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- (b) Lesson planning, teaching approaches, methods and skills reflect the ELE provider's philosophy, mission statement and objectives for the organisation and help learners meet their language learning objectives.
- (c) Lesson planning and teaching approaches reflect the ELE provider's commitment to the close alignment of the provider's curriculum, syllabus and course programme to the CEFR.
- (d) Lesson planning and teaching skills are core competences which are developed on initial teacher training courses and developed and fine-tuned as a teacher develops within the organisation.

- (e) Design and delivery of lessons is monitored by academic managers.
- (f) Academic managers, senior teachers and teacher trainers help newly qualified and less experienced teachers to continue to develop lesson planning skills and support newly qualified and less experienced teachers when planning.
- (g) There is a peer observation system in place to help all teachers and teacher trainers learn from each other in relation to approaches, skills, techniques and to help less experienced teachers learn from more experienced colleagues.

2.3.8 Lesson planning

- (a) Teachers plan lessons with clear intended learning outcomes, with reference to the curriculum, syllabus, course programme/schemes of work, and course materials, and planning is clearly and closely aligned with the CEFR.
- (b) When lesson planning, teachers demonstrate an ability to:
 - (i) take learner needs, interests and cultural background into account
 - (ii) incorporate a variety of teaching approaches as appropriate
 - (iii) formulate clear and achievable intended learning outcomes
 - (iv) formulate logically coherent and achievable stages and stage aims
 - (v) consider learner centredness at each stage in the plan
 - (vi) for language skills: formulate sufficiently detailed language analysis of meaning, form, pronunciation (and appropriacy, as necessary) and sufficiently detailed anticipated problems. Language analysis allows for learner participation in the analysis
 - (vii) for skills: focus on achievable intended learning outcomes in terms of learner development of sub-skills
 - (viii) include a variety of interaction patterns to support learner participation and effective classroom interaction
 - (ix) incorporate authentic use of language
 - (x) include content and language feedback following each speaking/writing stage
 - (xi) adapt course book materials as needed and design authentic materials, depending on learner needs and interests and intended learning outcomes.

2.3.9 Lesson delivery

- (a) Lessons are delivered with clear reference to the syllabus, CEFR can-do descriptors, as well as course materials.
- (b) Teaching skills demonstrate teachers have developed or are continuing to develop the following core competencies:
 - (i) an understanding of the need to empathise with learners and to generate rapport
 - (ii) an understanding of the need to promote effective learner training and study skills

- (iii) an understanding of effective classroom management skills, including, but not limited to, the following areas: elicitation, task setting and instructions, classroom layout, management of materials, board, and technology
- (iv) an ability to monitor, correct and manage emergent language
- (v) an ability to evaluate learning and assess achievement of intended learning outcomes or progress towards these
- (vi) an ability to adapt approaches and techniques in accordance with learner needs and learning preferences
- (vii) an awareness of inter-cultural diversity and needs
- (viii) an awareness of the language needs of different speakers, depending on their first language influences and interferences
- (ix) an awareness of differentiation.

2.3.10 Online provision

- (a) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that teachers have been suitably trained in effective planning and skills for the synchronous online context, including training on materials development, effective use of the online platform and tools, and planning for effective interaction in the online classroom.
- (b) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that learners have been suitably trained in effective use of the online platform, tools, materials and types of interaction in the online context.
- (c) Where online provision is offered, providers can demonstrate that teachers have received training in effective online platform management, classroom management and teaching skills for the online classroom context.
- (d) Providers have an emergency remote plan in place, together with a training plan for teachers, to upskill teachers quickly when required, and to enable the academic team to move to online provision with limited disturbance to staff and learners.

2.3.11 Monitoring of lesson planning and delivery

- (a) The quality of the learning experience is monitored on an on-going basis with regular quality assurance observations.
- (b) Quality assurance observation feedback is disseminated to teachers and this feedback is recorded.
- (c) Quality assurance observation feedback informs teacher/teacher trainer development needs and helps academic managers to plan development programmes to meet these needs.

2.4 Programme Design

2.4.1 Curriculum and syllabus design

- (a) Curriculum and syllabus design is completed and managed by suitably qualified and experienced senior academic staff, with learner needs and interests in mind.
- (b) Curriculum and syllabus design is clearly and closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with clearly defined learning outcomes, which are articulated in 'can-do' descriptors.
- (c) Curriculum and syllabus design and updates are approved by the academic governance committee, or the external expert, and approvals are documented.

2.4.1.1 Curriculum design considers:

- (a) the provider's educational philosophy and mission statement.
- (b) approach(es) to be taken, e.g., Communicative Approach, Task Based Learning Approach etc., aligned to the CEFR 'can-do' descriptors.

2.4.1.2 Syllabus design considers:

- (a) intended learning outcomes, aligned to the CEFR 'can-do' descriptors
- (b) assessment framework
- (c) formative and summative assessment types
- (d) learner age (where relevant e.g., teens, young adults, over 30s)
- (e) learner interests and needs
- (f) prior learning of learners
- (g) contact and guided learning hours to complete a given programme
- (h) materials, including essential and suggested supplementary resources
- (i) self-study and guided learning opportunities
- (j) regular opportunities for learner decisions on input, depending on interests and needs
- (k) adjustment and modification options at different stages, based on learner and teacher feedback and evolving needs
- (l) opportunities for learners to develop cultural awareness and to learn about life in Ireland – ideally, the programme includes lessons which are connected to the events programme
- (m) pathways to higher education
- (n) employment opportunities
- (o) learner development of an understanding of study and academic integrity conventions
- (p) learner development of learner independence and learner training strategies
- (q) opportunities for learners to practise English outside the classroom
- (r) remedial action opportunities for programme completion

2.4.1.3 Curriculum and syllabus reviews

Curriculum and syllabus reviews are periodically carried out as needed in order to

- (a) meet evolving needs of the ELE provider, e.g., new programme/learner types
- (b) meet evolving needs and interests of learners and teachers/teacher trainers
- (c) incorporate evolving practice and approaches
- (d) incorporate ideas from feedback from teachers, teacher trainers, learners, and other stakeholders
- (e) include new materials, which are approved by the academic governance committee.

2.4.1.4 Teacher training centres

Where the ELE provider is also a teacher training centre, input on teacher training courses includes

- (a) an introduction to the principles of course design in order to help newly qualified teachers understand the basic concepts
- (b) an introduction to the principles of the CEFR and 'can-do' descriptors

in addition to the other input sessions typically included on initial teacher training courses.

2.4.2 Academic staff development

(a) ELE providers ensure that all academic staff develop essential awareness of:

- (i) the provider's philosophy and educational mission statement
- (ii) the curriculum and syllabus rationale
- (iii) the principles of the CEFR
- (iv) alignment of the curriculum and syllabus to the CEFR
- (v) how to develop course programmes/schemes of work and lesson materials aligned to the CEFR descriptors and levels

(b) All staff members, particularly those who are in contact with learners and recruitment agents, also receive training on the principles behind the CEFR.

2.4.3 Assessment systems

(a) The provider's assessment framework

- (i) establishes the provider's approach to assessment of learners in both formal assessments which lead to external proficiency awards, and in-house formative and summative assessment
- (ii) is closely aligned to intended learning outcomes of each programme, expressed in 'can-do' descriptors from, or adapted from, the CEFR
- (iii) addresses assessment administrative arrangements
- (iv) includes provisions for the reasonable accommodation of learners with specific needs, e.g., dyslexia, visual or auditory impairments, or others who require reasonable accommodation to participate in assessment.

- (b) A suitably qualified/trained member(s) of the academic staff is/are responsible for assessment within the organisation.
- (c) Providers have quality assurance procedures, structures, and resources in place to ensure that all assessment types are fair, practical, valid, reliable and consistent.
- (d) Providers ensure that formative and summative exams assessing programmes are tailor made for the learner group and the skills practised.
- (e) Providers ensure that learners on ELE programmes leading to external proficiency exams are sufficiently prepared for these exams.
- (f) Learners are informed about when, how, and why they are assessed, and are provided with feedback on their progress and expected outcomes in internal and external summative examinations.
- (g) Regular tutorials are offered to learners during their course, e.g., following mock, mid-level and end-of-level exams, to help them focus on their learning needs and objectives
- (h) Remedial support is offered to learners where needed.
- (i) Learners periodically receive reports following exams, with guidance for further study. Reports are monitored by academic managers.
- (j) There is an internal appeal process in place for learners who consider an internal assessment result to be unfair or incorrect.

2.4.3.1 Types of assessment

- (a) A fair, practical, reliable, valid, and consistent placement testing system is in place which ensures that learners are placed in the correct level at the beginning of their course. This includes an assessment of grammar and lexical skills, writing and speaking skills and, if possible, reading and listening skills. The placement test may be taken prior to the commencement of the programme.
- (b) Effective corrective systems are in place to ensure that learners who have been incorrectly placed are moved to a more suitable level. This correction is completed as soon as possible, ideally by Day Two.
- (c) Fair, practical, reliable, valid, and consistent formative and summative assessment systems are in place to meet learner needs and are tailored to suit the skills practised on the programme.
- (d) Assessment may take different forms, including recycling, quizzes, tasks, projects, and presentations, as well as more traditional test types.
- (e) Fair, practical, reliable, valid, and consistent mock examinations are provided to learners preparing for external proficiency examinations.

2.4.3.2 Academic integrity

- (a) Procedures and systems are in place to manage the security and integrity of the assessment process, including:
 - (i) dissemination of information to learners about academic integrity
 - (ii) assessment procedures for academic staff

- (iii) standardisation of productive skills assessment
- (iv) storing of assessment materials
- (v) records of learner assessment

2.4.3.3 Information about assessment procedures

Information relating to assessment procedures is made available to learners, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (i) course programme and assessment calendar
- (ii) formative and summative assessment types
- (iii) learner responsibilities in relation to assessment
- (iv) academic integrity
- (v) end of level/exit certificates and reports
- (vi) guidance for learners on the selection of a proficiency exam appropriate to their needs and level
- (vii) information on grading systems for external proficiency examinations and its relationship to the CEFR scale
- (viii) external proficiency English language exams to enable progression into higher education
- (ix) tutorials
- (x) remedial support

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 7, Programme Design, and the Annex, Guidelines for ELE Providers on the Alignment of ELE Programmes to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), below)

2.5 Supports and Services for International Learners

2.5.1 Learner orientation and induction

Inductions should include, but are not limited to, information on areas such as the following:

- (i) information about the centre
- (ii) provider approach to teaching and learning
- (iii) description of programme
- (iv) assessment
- (v) lesson schedules and breaks
- (vi) events programme
- (vii) practical skills workshops

- (viii) practical advice, e.g., opening a bank account and getting a PPSN number
- (ix) who to speak with at the organisation for advice or help with issues
- (x) what to do and who to contact in an emergency
- (xi) learner responsibilities
- (xii) provider responsibilities
- (xiii) health and well being
- (xiv) management of emergencies
- (xv) local events and organisations of interest
- (xvi) cultural and inter-cultural awareness
- (xvii) code of conduct
- (xviii) complaints procedures
- (xix) academic integrity

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 8, Supports and Services for International Learners)

- (a) Learners are provided with a student handbook, which includes the information above in more detail, as well as other relevant information such as a map of the area and public transport options.
- (b) Learner groups consist of a variety of language speakers in order to optimise English language learning opportunities. Where this is not possible, ELE providers ensure that learners are aware of this fact before enrolling in a programme of study.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 9, Marketing and Recruitment)

2.5.2 Learners on study visas

- a) Further induction and information dissemination is offered to non-EEA learners on study visas about requirements which learners must be aware of.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, Section 8, Supports and Services for International Learners)

- b) ELE providers offer advice to learners on areas, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - (i) pathway options to further and higher education study
 - (ii) finding part-time employment
 - (iii) applying for a PPSN number
 - (iv) opening a bank account
 - (v) finding accommodation, if not provided by the provider

- c) Providers ensure the information provided at induction is easily accessible by all learners throughout their enrolment and offer reminders of this information at key points during the programme e.g., in the lead up to examinations.

2.5.3 Academic supports

- (a) Academic managers and the student welfare officer are available to offer study advice to learners on an on-going basis. Information on further and higher education study opportunities is made available to learners as needed.
- (b) There is a designated and adequate self-access area with resources and materials to help learners study outside of class time.

2.5.4 Events programme

- (a) Providers offer information on integration opportunities available to international learners, such as membership of book or film clubs, and encourage learners to avail of those opportunities.
- (b) The events programme is linked to learner needs and interests and may be linked to the academic programme, if appropriate. Events coordinators liaise with the academic managers to manage events selection and planning, including tasks linked to the ELE programme, as required.
- (c) The number of events staff members is proportional to the number of learners at the centre and there is a system in place to substitute members of staff as needed.
- (d) Events administrative procedures include
 - (i) the formulation of risk assessments for each event, with appropriate staff: learner ratios
 - (ii) management of activities and tasks linked to the academic programme, in collaboration with academic management
 - (iii) management of attendance records at events and completion of reports, as required.
 - (iv) recording of events and tasks completed on events on the management system, monitored by the events coordinator or academic manager.

2.5.5 Exit procedures for enrolled learners

- (a) Providers issue learners with certificates and reports acknowledging attendance and final level achieved at the end of the learner's enrolment duration. Certificates refer to the CEFR scale and 'can-do' descriptors.
- (b) Learners are informed of document storage systems, including storage of learner attendance and assessment records
- (c) Learners who require a study visa and who intend to enrol for a further period of English language learning with another ELE provider, as permitted, or who intend to enrol on a higher education programme, are provided with all required documentation, including letters of attendance and assessment records, by the current provider, by their final day with the provider.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, appendix six, for information on data protection legislation)

2.6 Staff Supports and Development

2.6.1 Induction procedures

- (a) ELE providers foster an environment which supports the well-being and integration of new staff into the organisation.
- (b) Induction procedures are in place for all new staff and include, but are not limited to, information on the following, as required by the new member(s) of staff:
 - (i) history of the organisation
 - (ii) organisational mission statement
 - (iii) organisational chart
 - (iv) student body
 - (v) client journey
 - (vi) memberships and accreditations
 - (vii) organisational and administrative systems, including communication channels
 - (viii) educational philosophy, curriculum, and syllabus
 - (ix) approach to teaching, learning and assessment
 - (x) academic integrity
 - (xi) HR systems, including details on contractual conditions e.g., leave, payroll information and employee rights and benefits
 - (xii) intercultural awareness training
 - (xiii) health and safety
 - (xiv) safeguarding, where appropriate
 - (xv) training for specific roles, as required
 - (xvi) possible professional development opportunities and paths within the organisation and relevant educational/training opportunities, including funding opportunities available
 - (xvii) quality assurance policies and procedures
 - (xviii) academic administrative procedures, including completion of attendance, logging of work completed in class and certificate and learner reports, as required
 - (xix) events administrative procedures, including the formulation of risk assessments for each event, management of activities and tasks linked to the academic programme, management of attendance records at events and completion of reports as required.
- (a) Staff handbooks are made available to new staff with all the information supplied at induction, as well as other relevant information.

2.6.2 Academic staff induction

- (a) Academic staff receive an induction on academic management in the organisation, including information on the following:
 - (i) curriculum, syllabus, course programmes/schemes of work
 - (ii) CEFR: principles, rationale, descriptors, course design
 - (iii) academic approach(es), methodologies and skills, lesson planning, selection and design of materials, academic approach(es), methodologies and skills, materials and resources, lesson planning and use of technology
 - (iv) assessment framework and procedures
 - (v) pastoral systems
 - (vi) exit procedures, including certificates and reports

Academic staff handbooks are made available to new staff with all the information supplied at the inductions, as well as other relevant information.

2.6.3 Student social events staff induction

- (a) Student social events staff receive an induction on
 - (i) effective planning and management of events and activities, including events with minors, if relevant
 - (ii) completing risk assessments
 - (iii) completing attendance records
 - (iv) essential first aid

2.6.4 Staff training and development

- (a) Continuous professional development is available to all staff, aligned to the organisation's mission statement, needs and strategic objectives.
- (b) Cross-organisational training is planned to help different members of staff understand structures and roles within the organisation, as well as specific areas, e.g., training in proficiency examination types for administrative and sales and marketing staff.
- (c) All staff training is documented.

2.6.5 Administrative staff training and development

- (a) Administrative staff receive regular professional development, and training, as appropriate, to ensure that they continue to learn and that their processes and procedures are current.
- (b) A documented CPD plan is in place for all administrative staff and training in areas of administrative systems, such as customer service, as and other areas, such as health and safety, is offered to administrative staff, as required.

2.6.6 Academic staff training and development

- (a) A documented CPD plan is in place for all academic staff, including managers, teacher trainers and teachers in order to:

- (i) meet the developmental needs of the academic staff
- (ii) ensure that knowledge of the curriculum and syllabus, aligned to the CEFR, is current
- (iii) ensure that practice is current
- (b) CPD includes a developmental observation cycle for all academic team members, including pre-lesson meeting, submission of lesson plan and post observation feedback.
- (c) Developmental needs are identified through the observation cycle and this informs the CPD plan for academic staff.

2.6.7 Sales and marketing staff training and development

- (a) Sales and marketing staff receive regular professional development and training, as appropriate, to ensure that processes and procedures, as well as organisational information, are current.
- (b) Training is given in areas such as direct sales, ethical practices and the London Statement, agent meetings and workshops and making effective presentations.
- (c) A documented CPD plan is in place for all sales and marketing staff, including managers, to support clear, transparent, knowledgeable, ethical and effective sales and marketing practices.

(Please see the Code of Practice for English Language Education, appendix three, The London Statement 2012)

2.6.8 Appraisals

Documented appraisals for all staff members take place at least on an annual basis, during which training and development needs and career plans are identified and agreed.

Annex: Guidelines for ELE Providers on the Alignment of ELE Programmes to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

1 Introduction

Section 7 of the Code of Practice for English Language Education sets out requirements in relation to ELE programme design. ELE providers who wish to seek authorisation to use the IEM are required to demonstrate that there is a clear and well-designed ELE programme in place, where the curriculum, syllabus, course programme(s)/schemes of work and assessment framework are clearly and closely aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and where the ELE programme meets the needs of learners. This annex provides guidelines for ELE providers on how to develop, or further develop, their ELE programme framework in alignment with the CEFR, in order to meet the ELE Code, Section 7, requirements.

1.1 QQI briefings on CEFR alignment

These guidelines are complemented by briefings offered to ELE providers by QQI in Autumn 2022. These briefings support the development, or further development, of ELE provider curricula, syllabi, and course programmes/schemes of work in alignment with the CEFR. Higher education providers that offer English language programmes are also invited by QQI to attend these briefings, which support the further enhancement and development of ELE and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) provision at higher education institutes.

1.2 Future developments in guidelines on CEFR alignment for ELE providers

The initial focus of these guidelines for ELE providers is to offer providers support in the development, or further development, of the alignment of their programme framework with the CEFR as part of their preparation to seek authorisation to use the IEM. However, further development work in alignment with the CEFR is planned. Alignment of ELE modes of assessment to the CEFR will form the next stage in the development of academic programme alignment to the framework.

Other development of guidelines on CEFR alignment for ELE providers include:

- Alignment of English for Academic Purposes programmes to the CEFR
- Alignment of English for Specific Purposes programmes to the CEFR
- Alignment of English for Teens and Young Learners programmes to the CEFR

QQI may consider further expanding these guidelines to include the alignment of curricula and syllabi of other language programmes with the CEFR.

1.3 Scope of alignment of ELE programmes with the CEFR

These guidelines for ELE providers are designed to support providers in the process of the alignment of their ELE programme framework with the CEFR, specifically with the Performance Descriptors detailed in the [Common European Framework of Reference Companion Volume, 2020](#). The CEFR is an international, validated set of standards for describing language ability. Aligning curricula and syllabi to the CEFR will allow ELE providers to further develop and enhance their ELE programmes and support the quality and consistency of ELE provision to international learners in Ireland by:

- delivering recognisable and comparable performance objectives for ELE providers, learners and other key stakeholders
- supporting quality assurance for ELE providers, learners, and other key stakeholders

These guidelines outline a process for conducting the alignment of a programme curriculum and/or supporting syllabus to the CEFR. The processes described in these guidelines are based on the Council of Europe document [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook \(2022\)](#).

2 Background to the CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR), is a key instrument in language education. The result of over twenty years of research, the CEFR was first published in 2001, and was updated to reflect contemporary needs and pedagogies in an edition published in 2020. The framework was designed to provide a clear, transparent, coherent, and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabus and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials and the assessment of foreign or second language proficiency.

The CEFR is built on the concept of communicative language competences and the performance descriptors capture both the communicative **activities** that a language learner may need, as well as the **strategies** and **competences** required to perform those tasks successfully. It is intended as a tool for reflection, communication, and empowerment. Its main aim is to facilitate transparency and comparability in the provision of language education and qualifications nationally and internationally.

According to the [Council of Europe CEFR uses and objectives](#), the main objectives of the CEFR are as follows:

- promoting plurilingualism and diversification in the choice of languages in the curriculum
- supporting the development and demonstration of the plurilingual profile of individual learners
- developing and reviewing the content of language curricula and defining positive 'can do' descriptors adapted to the age, interests and needs of learners
- designing and developing textbooks and teaching material
- supporting teacher education and cooperation among teachers of different languages
- enhancing quality and success in learning, teaching and assessment
- facilitating transparency in testing and the comparability of certifications

A key objective of the CEFR is to "promote common understanding across the education systems of Council of Europe member states." (*Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:10*)

Since its inception, the CEFR has gained significant recognition across Europe, and in wider international contexts, as a reliable set of standards that can define language ability and performance across a scale ranging from beginner to very advanced learners.

The CEFR is available in 37 languages, including Irish and sign language. The framework is extensively used in different ways in further and higher education, in language teacher education and in primary and secondary education. It is used by employers, course book writers and national cultural institutes. At government level internationally, it is used to inform national strategy documentation related to language education and curriculum reform, and as formal proof of language level requirements for migrants, students accessing higher education and civil servants.

The *Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Companion Volume)*, with revised and additional descriptors, was published in 2020 as a complement to the existing CEFR, and it is this [CEFR Companion Volume](#) which these guidelines will refer to throughout.

2.1 CEFR levels, modes, and descriptors

The CEFR consists of three levels of proficiency:

A – basic user

B – independent user

C – proficient user

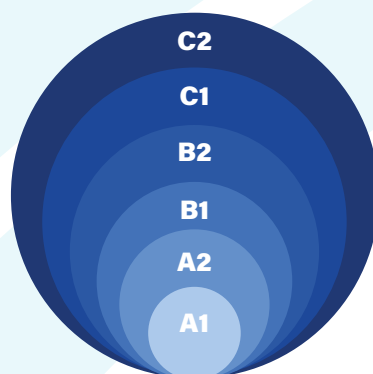
These three levels of proficiency represent broad bands of ability. Each of these is further divided into two sub-levels:

A1-A2

B1-B2

C1-C2

defining six performance levels overall. There is also some description of pre-A1, or complete beginner, level. These six core levels form the scale within which the performance descriptors are set. In some instances, the core levels are sub-divided into an upper and a lower element. These are often referred to by users as core and + levels, e.g., A2 and A2+. The diagram illustrates how the CEFR perceives ability to expand both vertically and horizontally:



(CEFR Companion Volume, 2020:36)

The CEFR recognises different language learning contexts, e.g., General English, English for Academic Purposes and English for Work.

The scales within which the performance descriptors are set are divided into four main modes of communication:

- Reception (listening and reading)
- Production (speaking and writing)
- Interaction (spoken and written)
- Mediation (facilitating communication between individuals, e.g., reporting written texts in speech, resolving delicate situations, and translating)

Each of the four modes has a Descriptor scale which describes overall abilities, e.g., Overall Oral Production. Each mode also has detailed scales which describe sub-sets of these abilities, e.g.,

- Reading: Reading for Orientation
- Listening: Understanding Announcements and Instructions.

These modes are supported by scales and strategies for Communicative Language Competences (CLC).

The process in these guidelines focuses on the following modes:

- Reception
- Production
- Interaction

but it also takes into consideration aspects from the Mediation mode which can be integrated into Reception, Production and Interaction modes.

Other scales, e.g., plurilingual, can be utilised depending on the given contexts

Please refer to the [CEFR Companion Volume Section 2.4](#), for further details. 

It is important to note that the CEFR:


- is a tool which is flexible to allow for localised or specific settings and contexts. The Scales and Performance Descriptors within should be seen as a base point which can be adjusted to learner needs, as long as the standardised process for alignment is followed.
- describes the threshold abilities of learners that belong to that particular level. If a learner does not have the abilities listed in the descriptors, then they will not be deemed to have this level of ability.

3 Alignment of a curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR

3.1 Benefits of alignment of a curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR

There are several advantages to aligning a curriculum and syllabus with the CEFR:

- (a) it creates a shared and transparent understanding of performance within the selected educational context
- (b) it establishes a solid basis for prospective learners to compare elements of an ELE provider's ELE programme
- (c) it allows for monitoring of quality assurance both within and across ELE providers
- (d) it increases international recognition across a wide stakeholder base, including ELE providers, higher education institutes and Government Departments nationally and internationally, thus increasing further opportunities for collaborations and partnerships internationally
- (e) it has the benefit of consensus, as the CEFR has been compiled by ELE experts as well as national and international practitioners within the ELE and HE sectors

**Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022](#),
Sections 1.3 and 1.4** 

3.2 Models of alignment with the CEFR

There are two alignment models:

- Model A: Aligning a provider's existing curriculum with the CEFR.
- Model B: Developing a new curriculum from the CEFR.

These guidelines will present a series of questions to help ELE providers decide on which curriculum alignment model, A or B above, the ELE programme under consideration is to be based before presenting an outline of the core process for alignment. This is followed by a description of what is needed to validate* the alignment and to ensure ongoing quality assurance.

**Please see the Glossary below for definitions of terms in these guidelines*

3.3 Curriculum or syllabus?

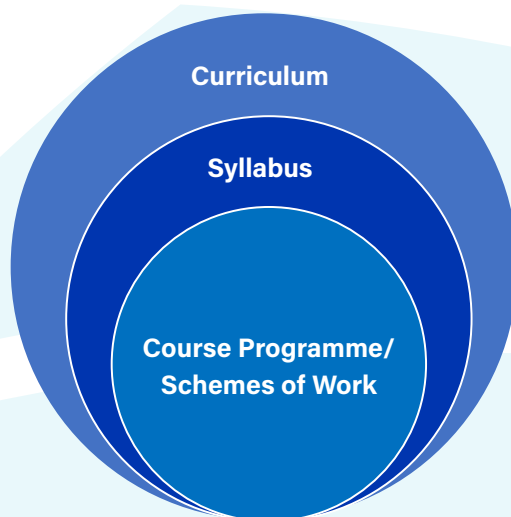
Deciding on a definition of curriculum or syllabus can be a challenge for language education providers, especially as there is currently no agreed definition (Beaco et al, 2016). For the purpose of these guidelines, curriculum is understood as

the overall intended learning outcomes and functions for the programme under consideration.

Syllabus is understood as

the manifestation of the curriculum through more detailed elements, such as programme topic, content, language systems and language skills etc.

The course programme (also known as schemes of work) for each level is then placed within the syllabus. The relationship between curriculum, syllabus and course programme/schemes of work is illustrated below:



There are multiple elements, or strands, to a curriculum. For the purpose of these guidelines, alignment of ELE provider programmes to the CEFR will focus on the intended learning outcomes strand.

Please see the Glossary below for definitions of 'curriculum' and 'syllabus'.

3.4 Selection of model of alignment with the CEFR

ELE providers may have in place one or more of the components of a curriculum, e.g., a curriculum, a syllabus and a course programme/schemes of work, or may just have a syllabus and course programme/schemes of work. Providers may also work with a syllabus based on a selected ELE course book.

The statements below will help ELE providers decide which alignment model they should select for their specific teaching and learning context.

3.4.1 Questions for ELE providers to consider regarding the selection of an alignment model:

Which of these scenarios does your programme most closely identify with? Please select all that apply:

- i) The programme has a logically structured programme with a clear rationale and learning outcomes specifically tailored to learner needs
- ii) The programme has a list of content points which support the curriculum, i.e., a syllabus.
- iii) The programme has a list of content points but no overarching intended learning outcomes or communicative functions.
- iv) The programme follows the syllabus of a selected course book.

Selection of option (i) and/or (ii): please follow Alignment Model A

Selection of option (iii) and/or (iv): please follow Alignment Model B

The process described in these guidelines represents a concise version of the process detailed in *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook*, 2022. These guidelines outline the basic

steps in an alignment relevant to the context of the ELE sector in Ireland in order to provide an accessible and actionable method of alignment for ELE providers.

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Chapters 2-6.](#) 

4 Decisions to be made prior to starting the alignment process

4.1 Create a Decision Group

The academic manager(s) should begin by creating a group of participants, or Decision Group. Participants for the Decision Group are selected based on criteria which are decided on by the academic manager(s), and all participants should have some understanding of the progression of CEFR levels. The entire process should be collaborative; therefore, several academic staff members should be involved in the Decision Group. Smaller ELE providers may choose to involve all academic staff members, while in larger ELE providers, academic managers may choose participants for the Decision Group based on their qualifications, experience and/or responsibilities.

Options to select from when creating a Decision Group:

- (i) Invite all academic staff members to participate. It is essential that all participants have some understanding of the progression of CEFR levels, and a proportion should have relevant qualifications and/or experience, e.g., experience in the development of a curriculum and syllabus in alignment with the CEFR, or experience of using CEFR aligned materials.
- (ii) Invite teachers with relevant experience to join initially and invite other teachers to join at a later stage, e.g., the reviewing stage
- (iii) Smaller ELE providers: invite teachers with relevant experience and recruit some external expert* support

**Please see the Glossary below for a definition of 'external expert'*

The academic manager(s) or Decision Group should select and appoint a coordinator. In larger ELE provider organisations, this is often the lead teacher, coordinator or academic head for the specific ELE programme or target learner group under consideration, while in smaller providers, this may be the academic manager who takes the role of coordinator.

4.2 Allocate a timeline and a budget for the process

The time allocated and costs will affect the scope of what ELE providers can achieve. This may affect academic choices made e.g., the level of detail or specificity. It is important to follow each stage and step in the process as this is an essential part of validating the alignment. However, it is recognised that ELE providers must work within their means and achieve what is possible in the first instance. It is important to consider the process as iterative and organic and to achieve the objective of putting a foundation in place. This foundation can then be adjusted and expanded, as needed, over time.

4.3 Build a schedule for the process

The academic manager(s) and Decision Group decide on a schedule, allowing time for reflection within and between stages. The scope of the schedule may form part of an ELE provider's validation argument by demonstrating that decisions have been made in a timely manner.

Please see Appendix one for a more detailed list of pre-questions to consider.

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:17](#). 

4.4 Document the process

Each stage of the process is reported. This reporting is captured in a series of documents, which are essential for:

- (i) providing evidence for the validation of the process and outcomes
- (ii) creating a record of rationales to inform future iterations.

For each stage, including those decisions made before the start of the process, the following is documented:

- the selection criteria for participants in the Design Group and the expertise and roles of the participants
- the different steps taken within each stage of the process
- a description on what decisions have been made, as well as how and why they were made
- the outcomes of each specific stage

These reports will provide evidence for quality monitoring and quality assurance at later stages in the process.

4.5 A Note on Young Learners (YLS)

The Council of Europe defines YLS as those between the ages of 7 and 15. The typical age profile of YLS who study an ELE programme at an Irish ELE provider is 11-16/17. The CEFR is designed for young adult and adult learners and is therefore not suitable for YLS. However, there are now two sets of CEFR Descriptors which reflect the needs and cognitive abilities of younger learners. These contain the CEFR Descriptors which are relevant to the 7-15 age group, together with some descriptors from accredited portfolios. ELE providers who offer ELE programmes for YLS should use the especially selected performance descriptors in these documents. The process is the same, but the descriptors have been validated by a team of experts as suitable for YLS.

Please see the Reference below for a link to these sets of YL Descriptors.

The CEFR is not intended for very young learners under 7 years of age. If ELE providers offer courses, e.g., with family groups, to this learner cohort, they should seek other methods to validate their content externally, e.g., by aligning their programmes to state primary school programmes.

5 Models of Alignment: Model A and Model B

This section describes the core process for alignment of curricula and syllabi to the CEFR. As mentioned above, ELE providers may select from one of two models of alignment:

- Model A: Aligning a provider's existing curriculum with the CEFR.
- Model B: Developing a new curriculum from the CEFR.

5.1 Model of Alignment A: alignment of an existing curriculum and syllabus to the CEFR

This section describes the core process for aligning an existing curriculum and syllabus to the CEFR. The process described includes examples for a General English context as well as specific contexts, such as English for Academic Purposes or preparation for an external proficiency exam. ELE providers should follow this process, which will inform the validation argument. The detail within each step may differ according to ELE provider resources, as outlined in 4.1 above.

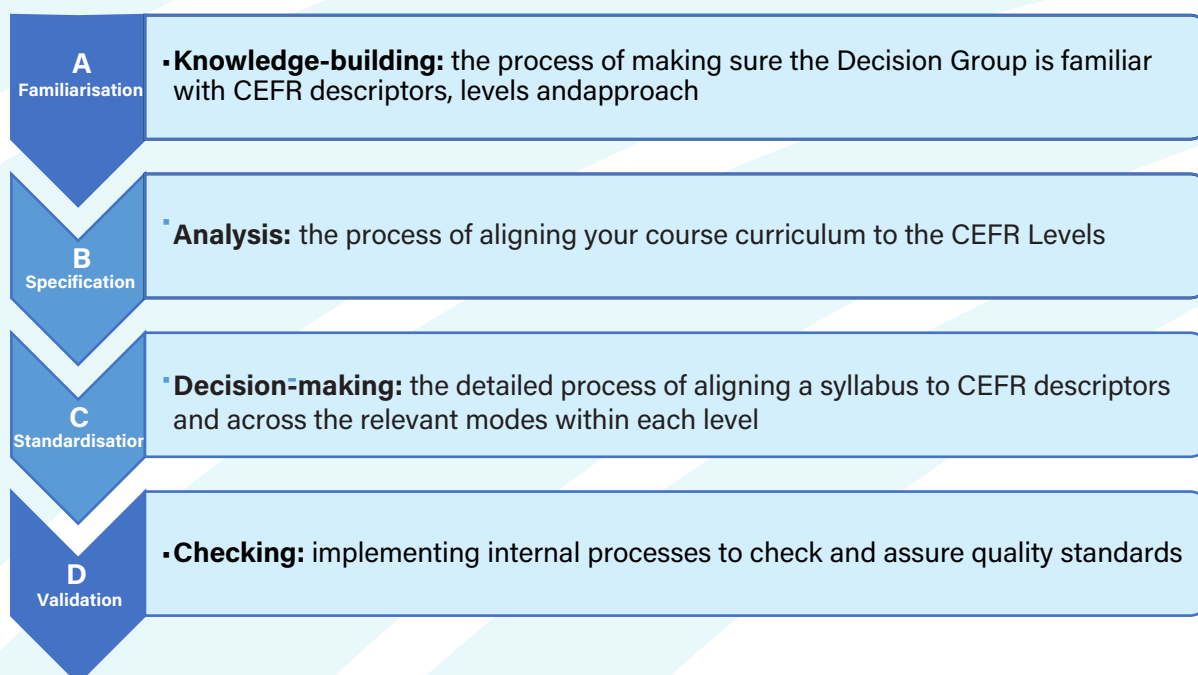
These guidelines outline four core stages to the process:

Stage A: Familiarisation

Stage B: Specification

Stage C: Standardisation


Stage D: Validation (confirmation of quality)



5.1.2 Points to consider for the academic manager:

- (i) Outline the different stages for the Decision Group before beginning the process to ensure clarity
- (ii) As the group passes through each stage, allow time between each stage for reflection by members of the Decision Group

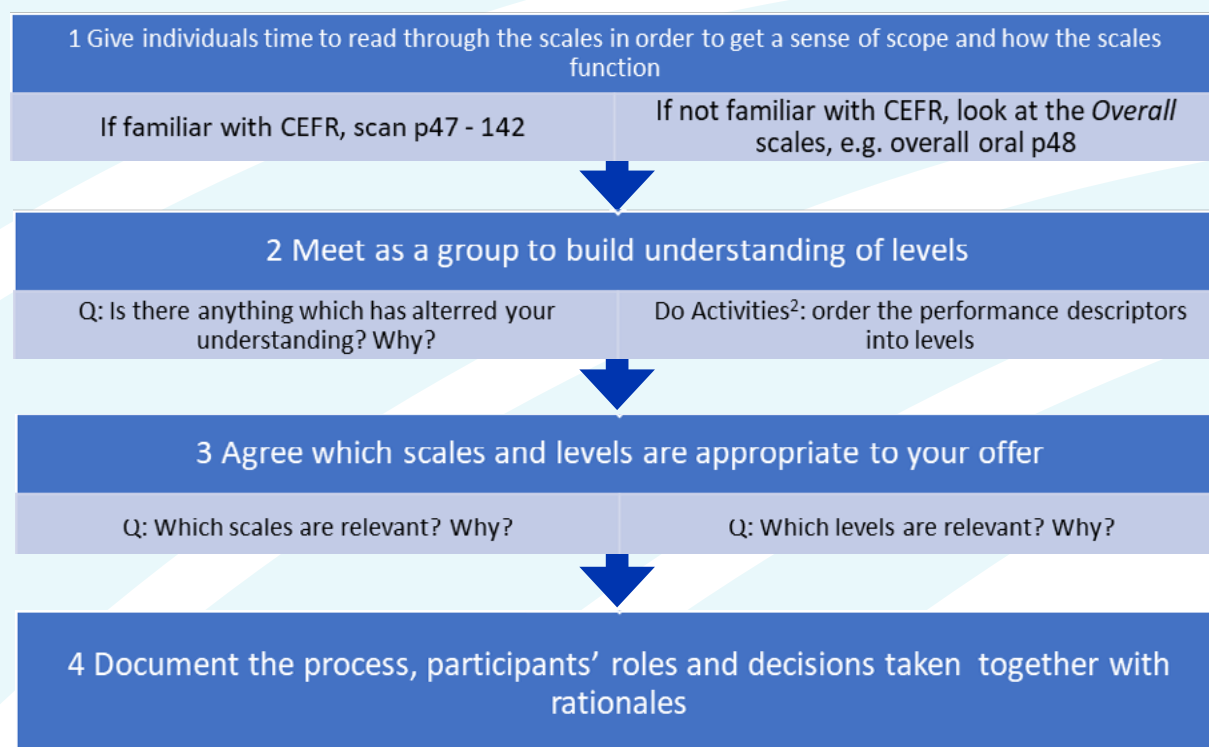
- (iii) Each stage may be expanded, depending on available time and resources.
- (iv) The Decision Group should not reduce or conflate any stage beyond what is outlined in these guidelines.

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook \(2022\)](#) to clarify detail and/or expand steps in the process. 

5.1.3 Stage A: Familiarisation

Stage A Familiarisation	Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure all participants are familiar with the purpose and approach of the CEFR To decide which scales are relevant to the context of the specific curriculum which is undergoing alignment
------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Note: all page numbers below in the graphics below refer to the [CEFR Companion Volume \(2020\)](#)




5.1.4 Points to consider

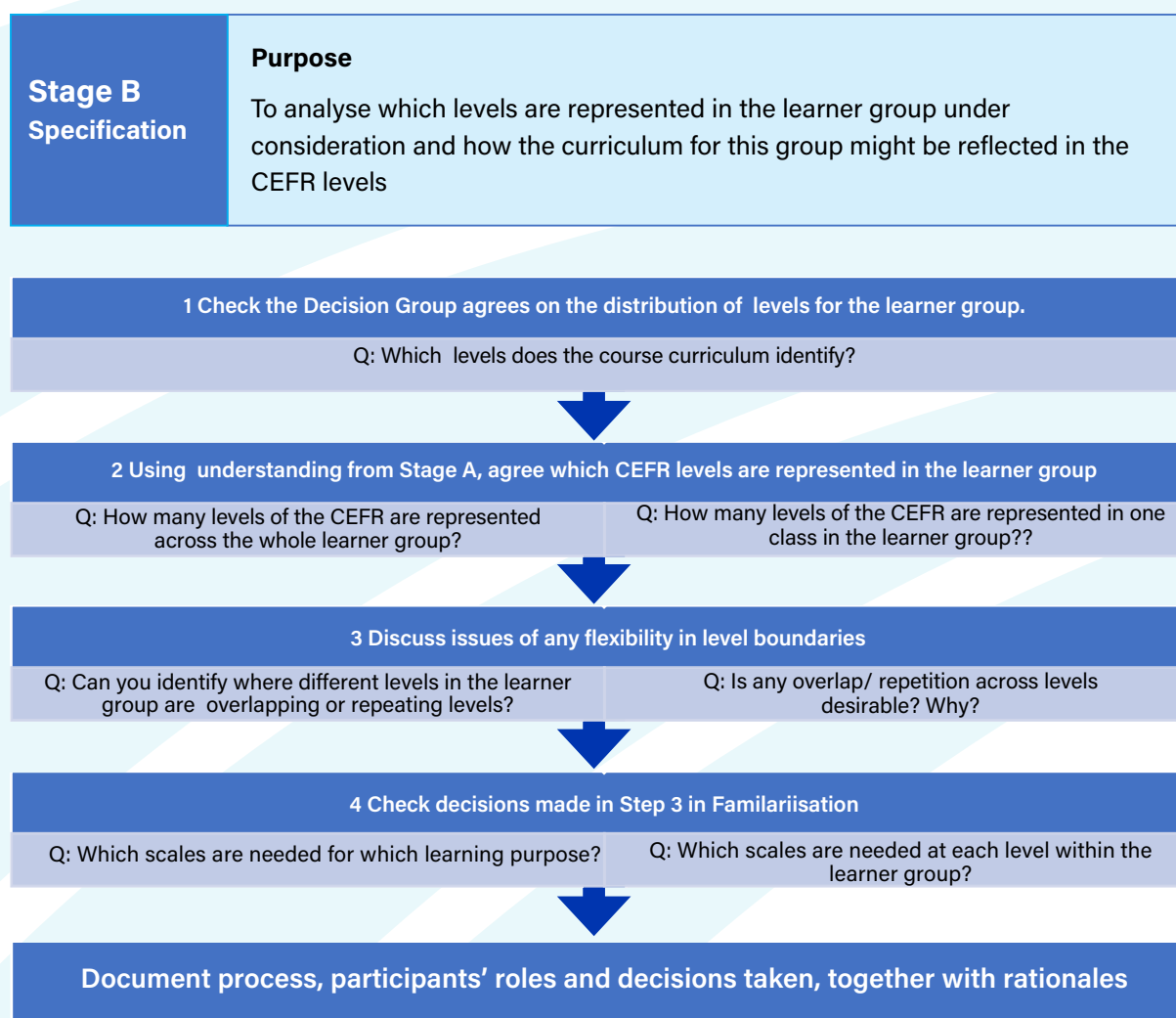
- Participants do not need to memorise the scales or performance descriptors. The focus is to become familiar with the approach and to start thinking about levels and progression.
- In Stage A, If the Decision Group is unfamiliar with the CEFR, then they should use scales at the Overall level. If the Decision Group is familiar with the CEFR, then the academic manager(s) may wish to choose scales which the Group may find more challenging to level, e.g., speaking.

- For Stage A, with a particular context in mind, the academic manager(s) may wish to pre-select some of the scales the Decision Group should focus on, e.g., for a Business English course, a focus on Reading Correspondence (p54) would be more relevant than Reading as a Leisure Activity (p58). However, the focus is on understanding the levels generally and decisions regarding which scales are relevant will be made when the Decisions Group has the discussion in Step 3.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the activity and how far their own experience and knowledge informed their understanding, and if there was anything that challenged this.

Please see Appendix two for example activities.

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook \(2022\)](#)
Chapter 2. 

5.1.5 Stage B: Specification

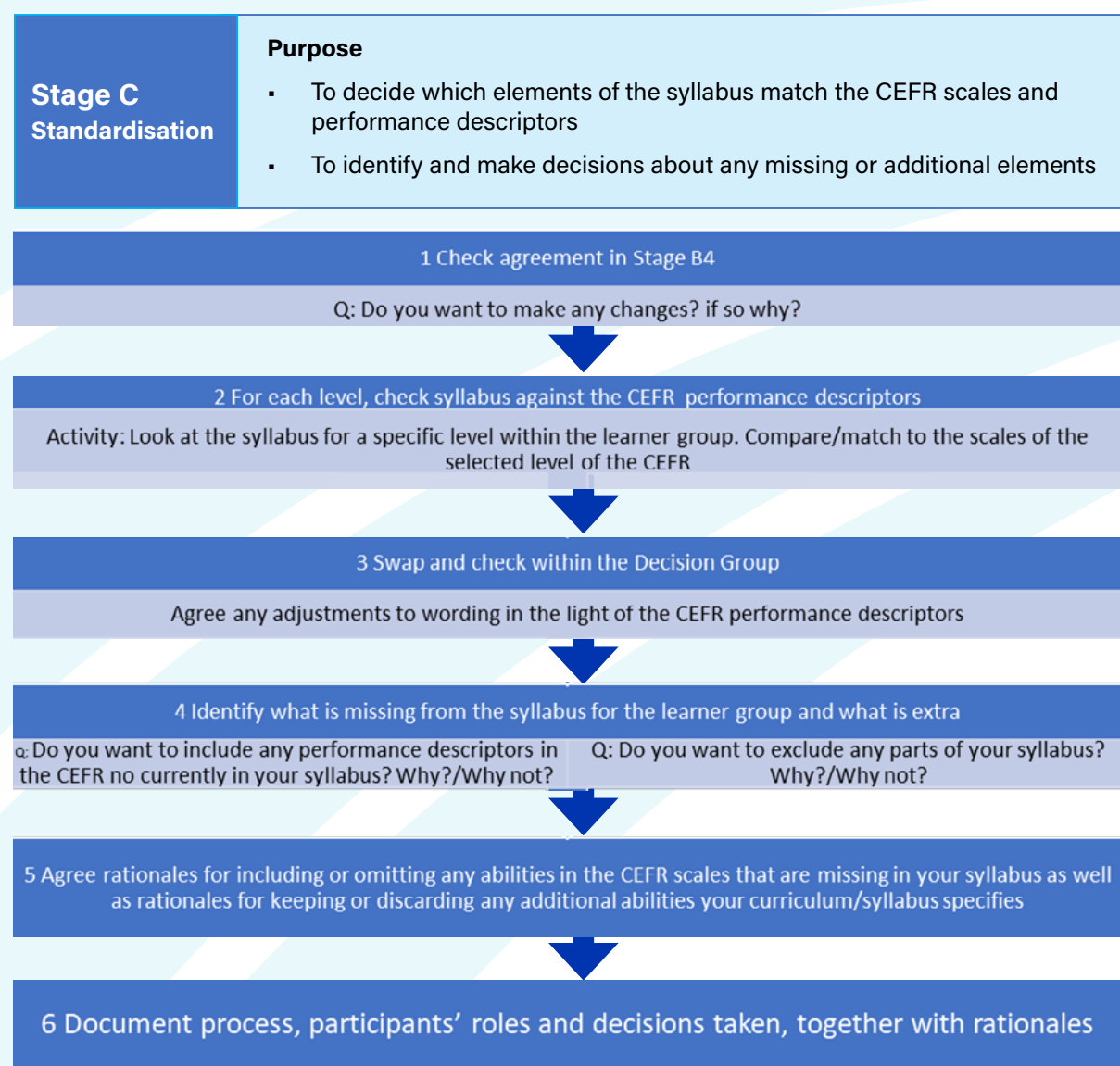


5.1.6 Points to consider:

- At this stage, it is important to remain focused on the scales which reflect the target learner group's needs rather than the ELE provider's curriculum.
- It is not essential for the target learner group to represent all CEFR levels and it is possible that a given target learner group profile may represent more than one CEFR level.
- There may be some overlap in the scales between target learner groups, e.g., an elementary class and a lower intermediate class may both have some Performance Descriptors from A2 level in them.
- In Step 4, relevant scales may change through the levels, e.g., at lower levels, Reading for Pleasure may not be relevant but may be pertinent at higher levels.
- After Step 4, allow the group time to reflect on the process and how satisfied they are with their analysis.

Please see Appendix three for example template

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Chapter 3.](#) 

5.1.7 Stage C: Standardisation

5.1.8 Points to consider

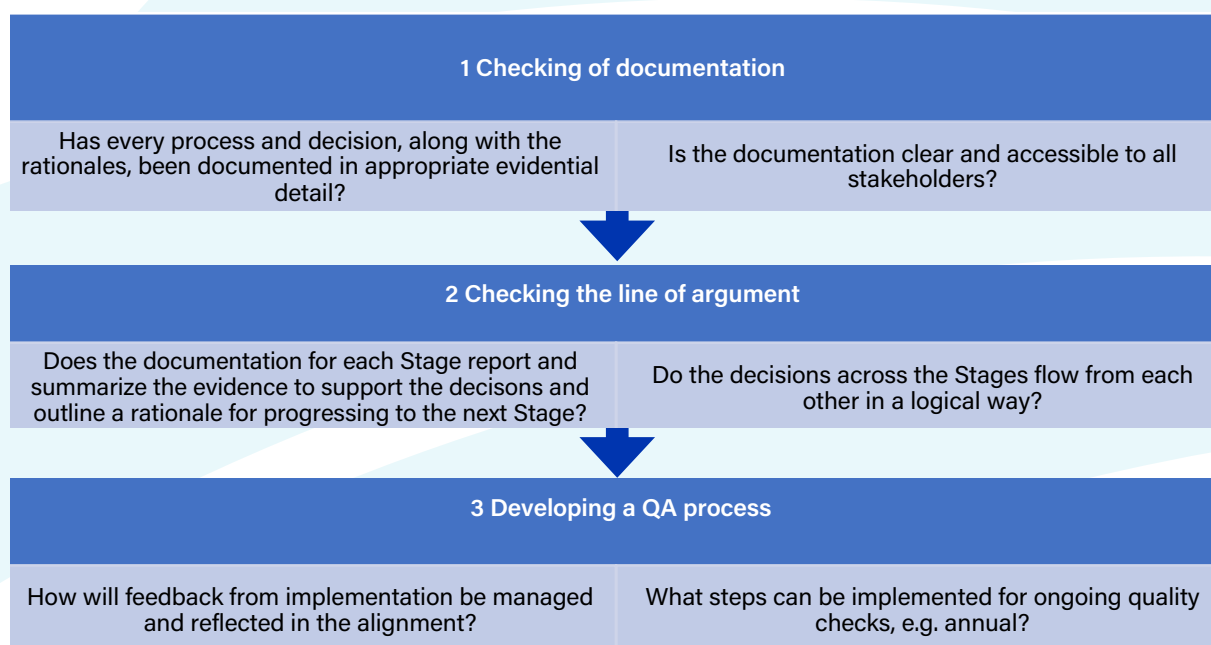
- The Decision Group decides how to divide the syllabus alignment work based on resources, e.g., whether to focus on the alignment of one level or several levels in one meeting, or whether to assign break-out groups who later meet and discuss with others
- It is important to remember that the wording of the ELE provider syllabus is likely to be different from the wording of the CEFR performance descriptors, depending on the needs of the target learner group, but it is important to use the closest match possible. The wording of the provider syllabus does not need to be the same as the performance descriptors, but it should represent their intention and meaning.
- Some elements of the syllabus may capture more than one performance descriptor. For example, a speaking syllabus may include using a range of language for giving opinions which might be reflected in different scales in the CEFR, e.g., Oral Production and Linguistic Competence. Equally, a syllabus may specify separate learning outcomes which are covered by only one CEFR performance descriptor. For example, a writing syllabus may specify 'giving opinions' and 'using supporting examples' as separate lesson objectives but these may be covered by a single performance descriptor in the Writing Production scales of the CEFR.
- There may be repetition across the different levels in a course. The Decision Group may decide that this is a desirable pedagogy, especially with younger learner groups. However, the Decision Group should ensure that any repetition of a learning outcome happens at the start or end of a course reflecting the progression of learning across the CEFR levels.
- If the syllabus is defined by the coursebook assigned to a course, it is essential not to assume the book has been already aligned to the CEFR, despite publisher claims. The Decision Group should conduct their own alignment process to check these claims and significant differences may be found. The Decision Group will then need to agree on any amendments they wish to make based on target learner needs and the purpose of learning.
- After Step 5, allow the group time to reflect on the outcomes and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

Please see Appendix four for example activities

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Chapter 4](#) 

5.1.9 Stage D: Validation

Stage D Validation	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build an evidence base to support claims of reliable linking of the curriculum to the CEFR To report on the processes, evidence collected and decisions made via clear documentation To ensure there is an ongoing process to check quality standards
-------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



5.1.10 Points to consider:

- It is important to recognise that validation is not an absolute. The Decision Group can build claims from their evidence base, and these claims support the strength of the validation argument. It is not about creating a 'correct' or 'incorrect' version. Furthermore, it is likely that the validation of a provider's alignment will become stronger over time through review and further enhancement development
- Ensure that all documents are accessible to all stakeholders and consider readability
- Build a communication plan for key stakeholders, e.g., academic staff and Academic Committee, so that any stakeholder that needs to be involved is consulted in a timely manner.
- The ELE provider may wish to consider consulting with an external expert to confirm processes, reporting and arguments.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the dynamics and outcomes of the whole process and decisions made and how far it has increased their understanding and expertise.

Please see [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:45 and Chapter 6.](#)

5.2 Model of Alignment B: Developing a curriculum and syllabus from the CEFR

ELE providers may need to develop a curriculum for a General English course or for a specific learning context, e.g., English for Academic Purposes or a preparation programme for an external proficiency exam. In this case, the Decision Group will use the criteria (performance descriptors) in the CEFR to help them develop an aligned curriculum for the given course. In most cases, providers will already be using some form of syllabus, even if this is a basic course book content syllabus. It is best to start with this, i.e., to use what providers already have available rather than try to construct something new, and then to develop the curriculum and syllabus from this working basis.

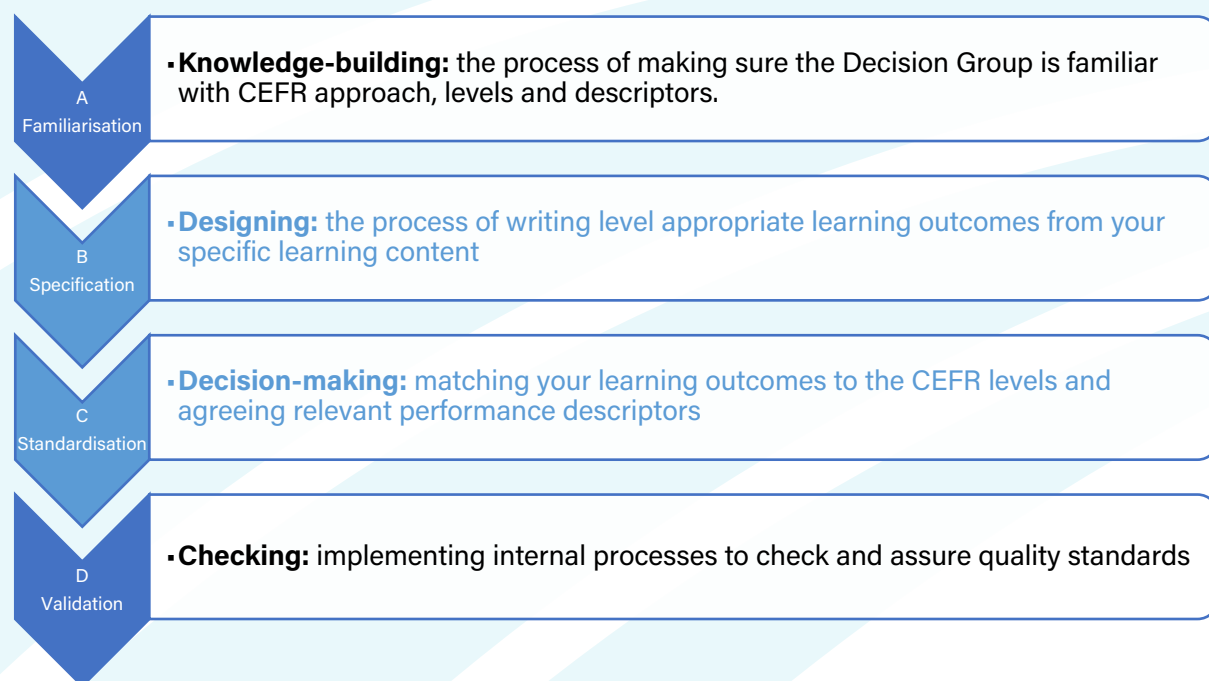
The Decision Group should follow the overall process outlined below, using the CEFR criteria to build and validate the curriculum and syllabus. Stages A and D are the same processes as those outlined in Model of Alignment A on pages 32-39. Stages B and C are specific to the development of a curriculum and/or syllabus and are outlined below.

Stage A: Familiarisation

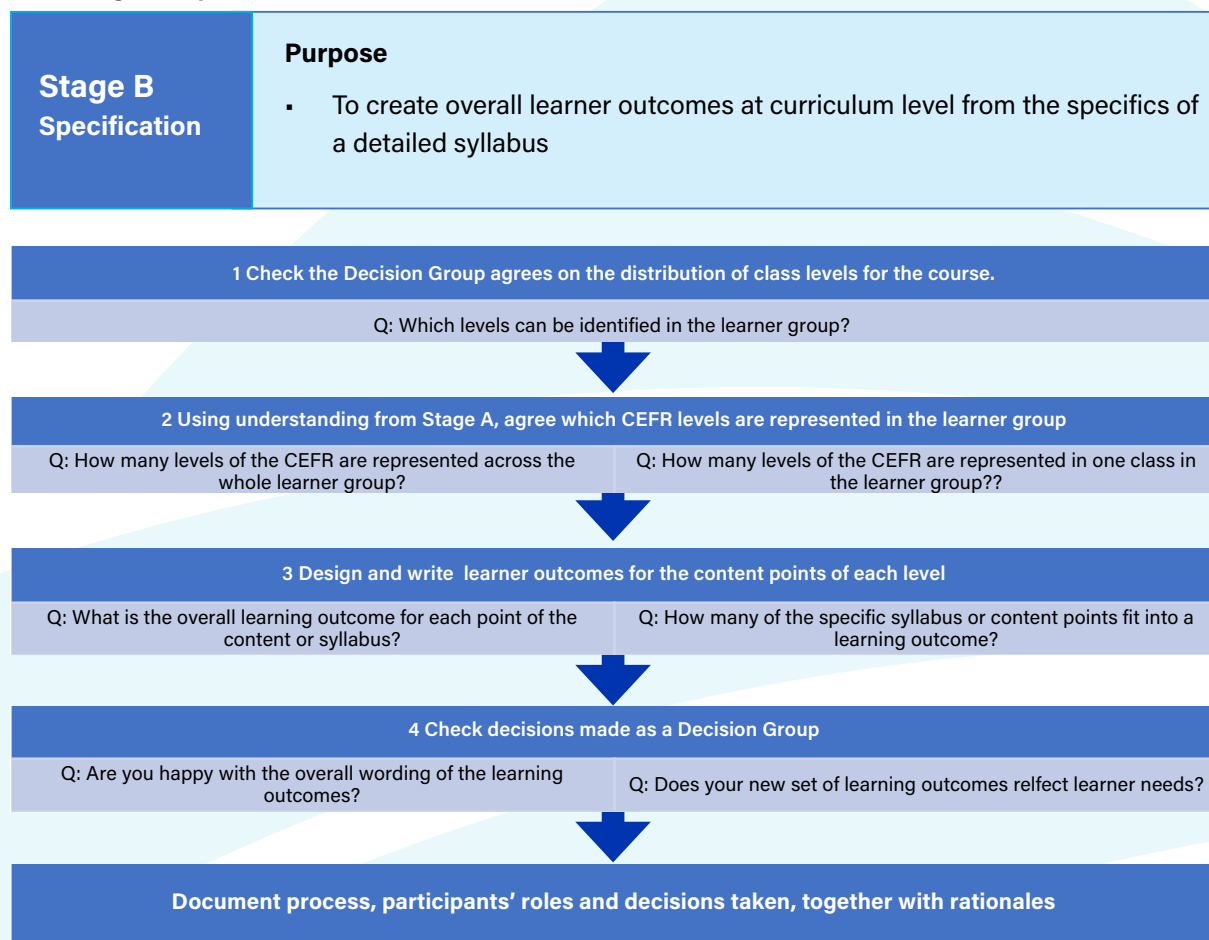
Stage B: Specification

Stage C: Standardisation

Stage D: Validation (confirmation of quality)



5.2.1 Stage B: Specification

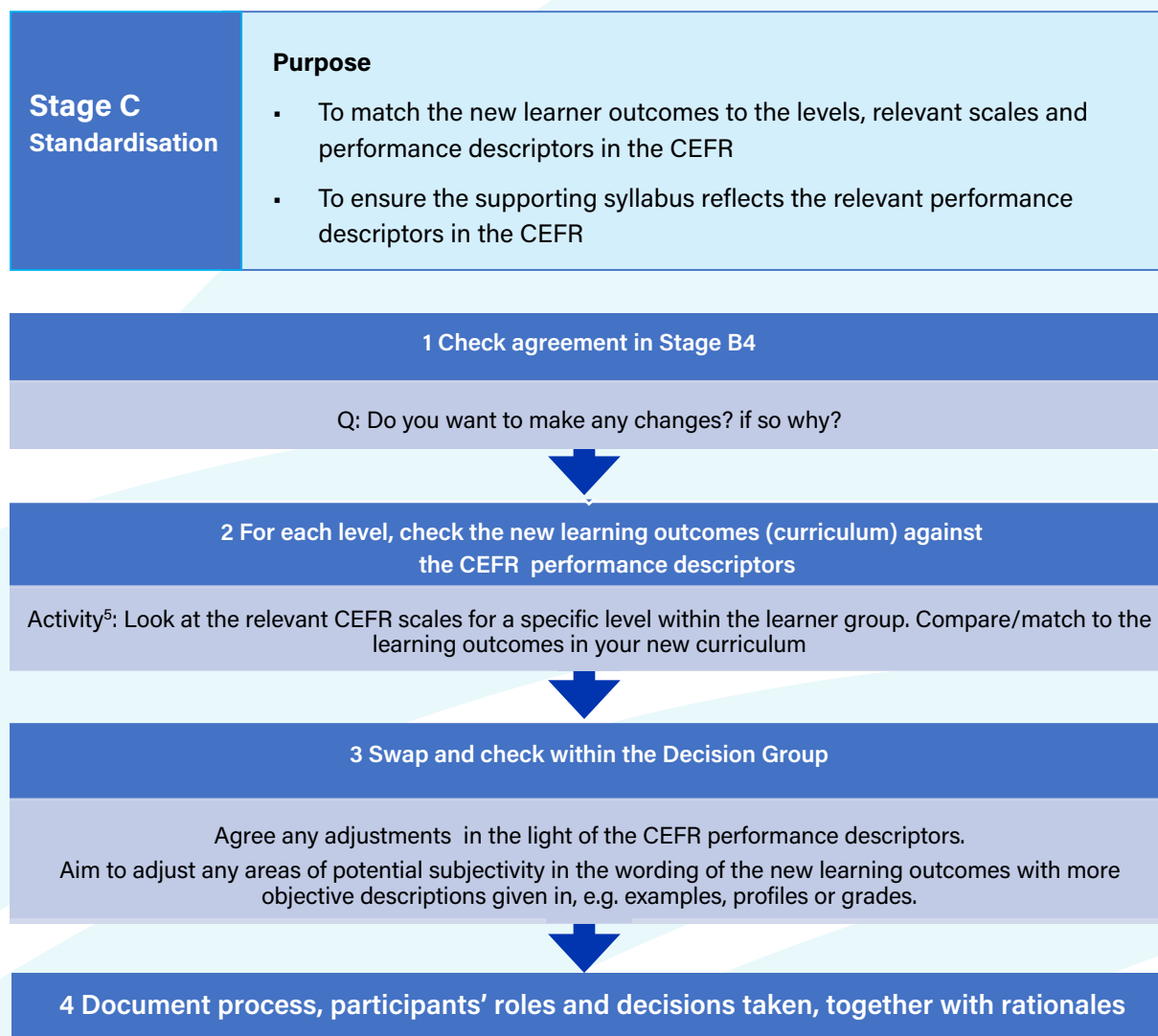


5.2.2 Points to consider:

- In Step 3, the Decision Group may wish to adjust the sequence of the syllabus.
- After Step 4, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on the process and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

Please see Appendix five for example activities

5.2.3 Stage C: Standardisation



5.2.4 Points to consider

- Provider learning outcomes will reflect the meaning and intention but do not need to reflect the exact wording of the CEFR descriptors
- When discussing decisions in Step 3, make sure the group is aware this is not about a wrong or right decision but about calibrating views and highlighting areas of doubt.
- After Step 3, allow the Decision Group time to reflect on any areas of doubt and the outcomes and how far they feel they can defend their decisions.

Please see Appendix six for example activities

Glossary of terms as used in these guidelines

Curriculum and syllabus

Curriculum: in this document, curriculum is taken to be the highest level of the hierarchy; it describes the focus of learning and overall learning goals and outcomes which are sequenced across a whole ELE programme. It defines the content plan or the whole study programme.

Syllabus: is subordinate to curriculum and defines specific instructions and activities within the curriculum for a particular audience; it may be manifested as elements of language and skills, together with learning outcomes or objectives of each lesson or learning unit.

Decision Group: this is the group that an ELE provider creates to discuss and make the decisions about the alignment. The group is also responsible for reporting on their work in order to support and prepare for the validation argument

External Expert

Smaller ELE providers may not have suitably qualified academic staff available to participate in the Decision Group. In this case, they may choose to seek the help of an external ELE expert, e.g., from a language consultancy company or accreditation organisation.

Generic level terms: beginner, elementary, intermediate, advanced

These level terms are used as generic references in examples. Each ELE provider may have a way to label their levels, and these are generic terms. Some ELE providers may already use the CEFR level labels, e.g., A2, but these should be checked carefully via the alignment process to make sure the label is accurate.

Scales and performance descriptors

Scales refer to the tables of activities in the CEFR, e.g.,

Reading for Orientation, Information Exchange

Performance descriptors refer to the specific abilities described within each level of each scale, e.g.,

Scale: Interviewing and being interviewed

A2 Performance Descriptor: Can answer simple questions and respond to simple statements in an interview.

Specification and standardisation

Specification : the process of analysing what an ELE provider has or designing what a provider needs for the range of levels they have, and checking against the CEFR

Standardisation: agreeing an ELE provider's learning outcomes against the scales in the CEFR (with the level of detail appropriate to provider needs) with the whole group; collecting and presenting evidence to support the provider's alignment claim

Validation

Validation as a concept has a specific meaning in this document, as described in [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:67](#)

- Process of ensuring fitness: collecting and presenting evidence to support claims of reliable linking with the CEFR
- Fitness for purpose: gathering together the evidence to form a coherent and convincing argument to support claims of reliable alignment with the CEFR

References and further reading

Beaco, J-C., Byram, M., Cavalli, M., Coste, D., Egli Cuenat, M., Goullier, F. & Panthier, J. (2016) Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/guide-for-the-development-and-implementation-of-curricula-for-plurilingual-and-intercultural-education>

Boyd, E. (2022), Commonality versus localization in curricula, In Little, D. & Figueras, N. (Eds.) *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

British Council, UKALTA, EALTA & ALTE (2022): *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook* https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/cefr_alignment_handbook_layout.pdf

Council of Europe, (2020): *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Companion Volume)* <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>

Council of Europe, (2018), *CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners Aged 7-10* <https://rm.coe.int/collated-representative-samples-descriptors-young-learners-volume-1-ag/16808b1688>

Council of Europe, (2018), *CEFR Descriptors for Young Learners Aged 11-15* <https://rm.coe.int/collated-representative-samples-descriptors-young-learners-volume-2-ag/16808b1689>

Richards, J.C. (2013), *Curriculum Approaches in Language Teaching: Forward, Central and Backward Design*, RELC Journal 44 (1): 5-33

Reference Tools

The main CEFR website has a range of tools: e.g., a searchable tool for descriptors <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

Pease also refer to *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022, Tools and Resources, Section 4.3.2* 

Appendix One: Questions to consider before starting the process of alignment

1. Why are we doing this?
2. Which steps are essential for us in our context and for our purposes?
3. Which steps do we prioritise?
4. Which steps may not be necessary?
5. How long will the process take?
6. How much will it cost?
7. What expertise will we need, or have access to?
8. What resources (i.e., time, funding, expertise) do we need to plan for?
9. What is feasible given resources and limitations?

Please refer to [Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022:17](#) 

Appendix Two: Models A and B familiarisation example activities

Activity 1

Choose two or three of the Overall scales. Copy and then cut up the performance descriptors into Pre-A1/A1-C2 (including the upper and lower bands within each level) and mix up. Ask participants to order each scale by level, either individually or in pairs. Then check and discuss as a group.

Activity 2

Choose two or more of the Overall scales which are different from Activity 1. Copy out the performance descriptors in each selected scale in random order. Participants decide which level each performance descriptor is, noting that there may be more than one performance descriptor at each level. Check and discuss reasons why.

The Decision Group is likely to find the Overall scales the most useful at this stage but should also note the full range of scales. If participants in the Decision Group are familiar with the CEFR, the academic manager(s) may wish to choose scales specific to the context of the course which the group is aligning, e.g., for a Business English programme: Reading Instructions or Addressing Audiences

For reference: overall scales in the [CEFR Companion Volume](#)

Overall oral comprehension p48

Overall reading comprehension p53

Overall oral production p62

Overall written production p66

Overall oral interaction p71

Overall written interaction p 82

General linguistic range p130

Appendix Three: Model A specification example template

Template for mapping a curriculum (retrofit) to each CEFR level. This is a very simplified version of the range of forms in Appendices in *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook, 2022*, which can also be used if preferred.

		Examples
Date	date of decision meeting	30 th June 2023
Target learners	age, needs, etc	16-18
Domain	public / personal / occupational / educational	General English; personal
Area/skill	reception/production etc	Speaking: oral production
Levels of class	number of levels and names	4 levels: - beginner - elementary - intermediate - upper intermediate
Learning outcomes	define the learning outcomes in each level for the specified skill	Elementary describe very familiar topics e.g., self, family describe daily routine use simple formulaic expressions talk about likes & dislikes (and so on for other levels)
CEFR scales	Decide which CEFR scales in the specified skill are relevant to the learning outcomes	Overall oral production Sustained monologue: describing experiences
CEFR levels	Decide which CEFR levels within each selected scale reflects the learning outcome	Overall oral production: A2 Sustained monologue: describing experiences A1 and A2 (lower and upper band)*
Level decision	Decide which CEFR level each class level is within the learner group	Elementary = A2 (NB with features of A1)

*This may help providers with checking/adjusting the sequencing of their curriculum, if necessary.

Appendix Four: Model A standardisation example

The example shows how you might align the course syllabus for writing in an upper intermediate* class in English for Academic Purposes. This may involve matching to several scales, e.g., the overall writing scale or the general linguistic competence scale. The example shows how an alignment might work and points for discussion.

Example: From the Decision Group's discussions in Stage 2, group members have decided that the overall curriculum for the specific learner group level has aligned with B2 on the CEFR.

1 The Decision Group selects the scale needed for the curriculum point under consideration, in this case Writing: Reports and Essays. The Group focuses on the agreed level (B2), and on the levels either side of this, i.e., B1 and C1.

CEFR Writing: Reports & Essays

C1	<p>Can produce clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues.</p> <p>Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.</p> <p>Can produce a suitable introduction and conclusion to a longer report, article or dissertation on a complex academic or professional topic provided the topic is within their field of interest and there are opportunities for redrafting and revision.</p>
B2	<p>Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.</p> <p>Can produce a detailed description of a complex process.</p> <p>Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.</p> <p>Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p> <p>Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.</p>
B1	<p>Can produce short, simple essays on topics of interest.</p> <p>Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.</p> <p>Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within their field with some confidence.</p> <p>Can produce very brief reports in a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.</p> <p>Can present a topic in a short report or poster, using photographs and short blocks of text.</p>

1 The next step the Decision Group makes is to consider how to align the content detail within this. A template can be used to do this:

EXAMPLE: EAP Writing (Essays)		
Upper Intermediate Syllabus	CEFR Descriptor	Notes
Using formal phrases & language		See CLC scale
Using a range of language; paraphrasing		See CLC scale
Opening paragraphs in essays		<i>Not covered?</i>
Planning paragraphs & balancing an argument	B2 Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail.	Decisions: <i>Is this acceptable?</i> <i>Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</i> <i>+Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</i>
Giving opinions, with support	B2 Can produce an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Decisions: <i>Is this acceptable?</i> <i>Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</i> <i>+Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</i>
Using sources to support an argument	B2 Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.	Decisions: <i>Is this acceptable?</i> <i>Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</i> <i>+Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</i>
Outlining problems & suggesting solutions	B2 Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem.	Decisions: <i>Is this acceptable?</i> <i>Do we want to adapt our syllabus wording?</i> <i>+Is this in the most appropriate position in the sequence of the syllabus?</i>

*The position of a performances descriptor in the upper or lower band of the CEFR scale may help the Decision Group check that the sequence of the syllabus is appropriate for the learner group.

Below are examples of some additional points the Decision Group may wish to think about in the above activity.

- This is a C1 descriptor, which the Group might decide is relevant to/covered in the syllabus: *Can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.*
- The Group could decide to include it and will then need to decide where to sequence it, e.g., at the end of the Upper Intermediate course.
- The following B2 descriptor is the only one which does not seem to apply to the syllabus:
 - *Can produce a detailed description of a complex process.*
- The Group could decide if they wish to add this descriptor as a sub-skill or leave out as non-essential
- The following B1 descriptor is one which the Group may decide to include as revision from a lower-level class or as a starting point in the Upper Intermediate course:

Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.

Appendix Five: Model B specification example

Elementary coursebook topic/syllabus detail: weather (includes activities to practise weather lexis, grammar/functions for weather, speaking & reading skills activities about the weather, listening to weather forecasts, etc.)

1 Ask:

What is the overall learning outcome?

- To understand information about everyday topics?
- To understand information about the weather?
- To talk about what the weather is like?
- To talk about the weather in the future?
- To write about the typical weather in your country?

2 Decide on and write the learning outcome(s).

Try to make sure that the specific topic is not the focus but is an example of the context for a learning outcome.

Example learning outcome from the above syllabus content points:

To understand the most important information in very short monologues on everyday topics (example: weather)

The list of learning outcomes then becomes the higher level curriculum for the course/learner group.

Appendix Six: Model B standardisation example

The decisions to be made are to find the best match in the CEFR scales and descriptors for each learning outcome in the curriculum the Decision Group has created.

For the example in Appendix Five, the Decision Group could find the following scales and performance descriptors in the CEFR. Which one is most closely aligned to the learning outcome which has been specified?

Reception scales:

Understanding audio media & recordings

A2: *Can extract important information from short broadcasts (e.g., the weather forecast, concert announcements, sports results), provided people talk clearly.*

Reading for information & argument

A2(+): *Can understand the main points of short texts dealing with everyday topics (e.g., lifestyle, hobbies, sports, weather).*

The scale for Audio would be the most relevant and would confirm the appropriate level.

It is important to remember that the topic is not the focus; the specific topic may not be mentioned but may be captured under generic references such as 'everyday' topics, 'abstract' topics, 'less familiar' topics.

Submissions may be emailed to

international.education@qqi.ie

(please put 'QAGs ELE' in the subject field).

In your submission please clearly indicate:

1. *Your contact details.*
2. *Whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.*
3. *If you do not wish your submission to be published.*

The closing date for submissions is **16th December 2022**
