



## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK (NCF)?

*The NCF is the foundation for curricular development. It informs the enhancement and development of syllabus materials, teacher guides, textbooks, learning materials, and wider teaching resources (including technical and scientific resources). It supports pedagogic practice, and assessment approaches, and helps integrate and align all these elements.*

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### THE NCF SETS OUT:

- ✓ a contextualized mission and vision, plus goals and objectives for secondary education;
- ✓ the educational standards or competencies that pupils should demonstrate at each stage/grade in their education, in each subject;
- ✓ guidance on methodological approaches and pedagogic practices;
- ✓ guidance on assessment in classroom;
- ✓ a system to monitor and evaluate how the curriculum is implemented.





## HOW CAN THE NCF IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN?

### THE NCF:

- ✓ provides a blueprint, unified document for overarching curriculum reform;
- ✓ serves as a foundation for curricular development;  
is a powerful pedagogic tool for teachers. Learning outcomes and curriculum content have been developed to ensure they captures the interest of both pupils, and teachers, inspiring an enthusiasm for building knowledge and skills;
- ✓ encourages a truly 'competency based' model; teachers can facilitate tangible progress using practical approaches that build learners' confidence and skill, while working with highly structured, measurable competencies which can be readily assessed on an on-going basis;
- ✓ encourages an approach to learning and teaching in which assessment informs lesson planning and delivery, and differentiated content can cater to the specific needs of pupils. This shift in the approach to pedagogy is key to introducing a competency-based curriculum effectively;
- ✓ supports academic attainment at higher levels across all subject areas. The NCF is largely aligned with International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSEs) and A-Levels, and if the new curriculum is delivered in English, and if international qualifications are adopted (IGCSEs/A-Levels) school leavers (with A-Levels) could progress to study at leading international universities (including institutions in the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the United States of America);
- ✓ draws on international best practice and innovative educational reform to allow for greater alignment with international standards and good practice;
- ✓ provides access to pre-existing, evidence-based education materials developed with the benefit of significant resources;
- ✓ establishes significantly stronger accountability;
- ✓ ensures that Uzbekistan can benchmark its educational outcomes against leading international comparators;
- ✓ includes detailed roadmaps for implementation, to ensure that the process of curriculum reform is both structured and measurable.



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## DECIDE ON SUBJECTS AND DEFINE SUBJECT GROUPING WITHIN THE CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ALLOCATION

*A review of the Uzbek national curriculum shows that the wide range of distinct subjects currently offered within the secondary education system (such as Odobnoma, Fundamentals of the State and Law, National Ideas, Appreciation of the Motherland, and History of Religion) are not usually allocated stand-alone status internationally. Equally, subject groupings in use in Uzbekistan differ from the international context. It is recommended that subject groupings be amended to align more closely with international practice, as below.*



In addition, Uzbek students' overall learning hours are quite low in comparison with top performing countries. A wide body of international research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between instructional time allocation and learning outcomes.

It is strongly advised therefore that instructional time allocation for all core subjects be increased and the current 45-minute sessions be replaced with 1-hour sessions. Increased use of cross-curricular learning and subject merging / integration would allow for increased instructional time in core areas.

## PROPOSED SUBJECT GROUPING AND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ALLOCATION<sup>1</sup>:



### MATHEMATICS:

5 sessions per week



### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES:

History, Economics, Geography, Business Studies and Entrepreneurship: 2 sessions per week.



### LITERACY AND LANGUAGES:

Mother tongue (language of instruction) and Literature: 5 sessions per week

English (if not a language of instruction) and Literature: 5 sessions per week

Uzbek (if not a language of instruction) and Literature: 5 sessions per week

Russian/other foreign language and Literature<sup>2</sup>: 5 sessions per week

It is anticipated that subjects currently taught within 'Humanities and social sciences' including Odoynoma, Fundamentals of the State and Law, National Ideas, Appreciation of the Motherland, and History of Religion would be incorporated into the Humanities and Social Sciences.



### PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND HEALTH EDUCATION / SPORTS AND GAMES / ARTS:

Personal and Social Development and Health / Physical Education & Arts (Music, Drawing, etc.): 1 session per week



### SCIENCES (including Technology):

Biology: 3 sessions per week

Chemistry: 3 sessions per week

Physics: 3 sessions per week

Within the Sciences, in this context, Technical Drawing, Design and Technology, and Computer Science and IT would be incorporated into Sciences and Mathematics.

This allocation would incorporate Physical Education, Music Education, Fine Arts and Drawing (currently 1 session per week in 1-9 grades). It should be noted that, in numerous international contexts, including the United Kingdom, limited time is allocated to Physical Education in secondary schooling, with no compulsory content in the final stages of secondary schooling.

It is anticipated that, if included, Basic Military Training, would take place in addition to the hours specified.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the premise that increasing total instructional time of 32 x 45-minute session per week is not possible

<sup>2</sup> If not a language of instruction, and if prioritized by the Government, as per current discussions



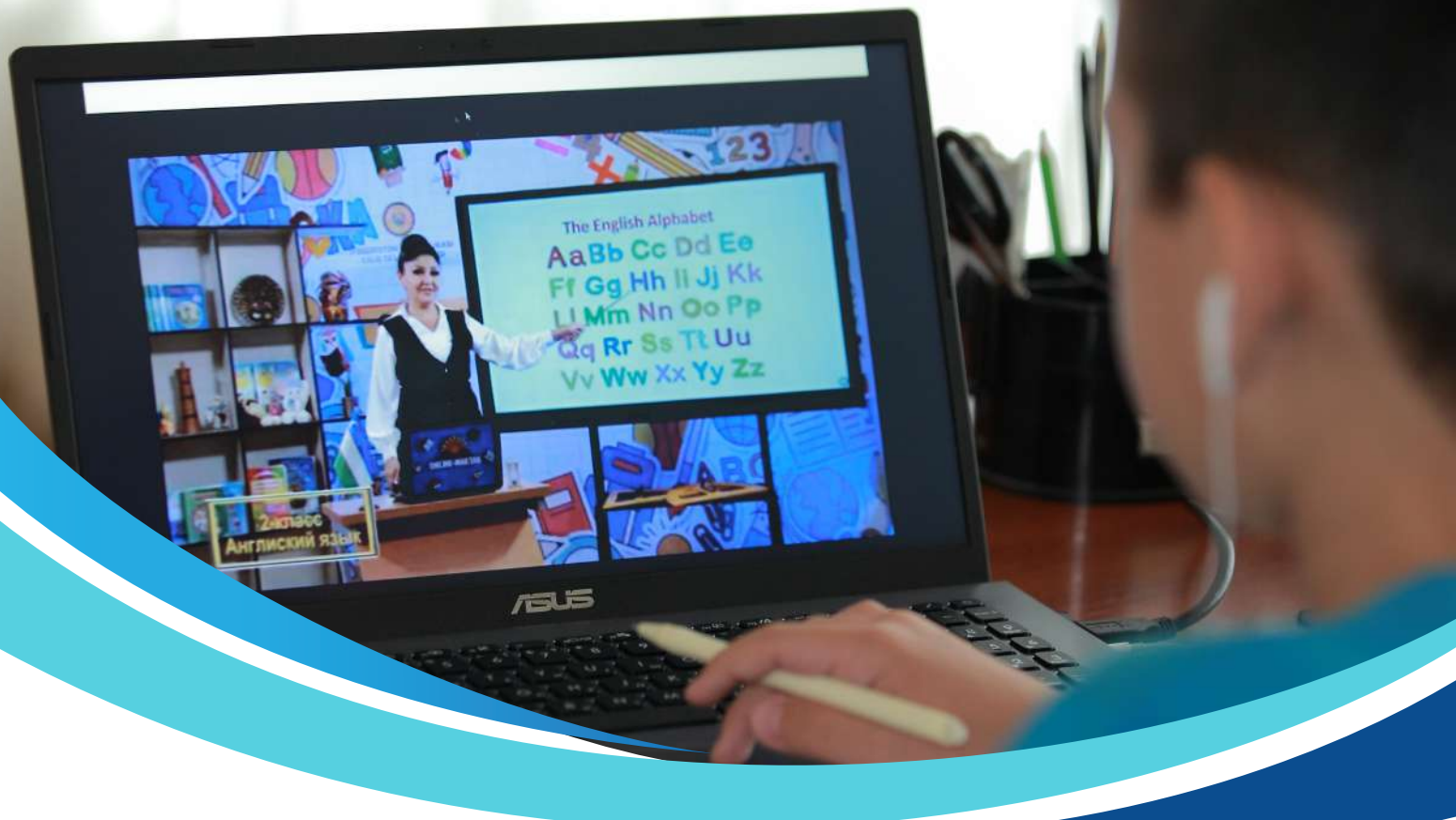
## **WILL NCF STANDARDS HAVE A HIGHER ACADEMIC LEVEL AND TEACHING APPROACH THAT WILL ALIGN THEM WITH BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES?**

*With regards to academic level, current standards in Uzbekistan, and therefore learners' attainment, are comparatively lower than leading countries.*



Given the national agenda to improve attainment in international assessment comparisons (e.g. PISA/TIMSS, etc.) it is essential that the level of attainment and progress be significantly improved. The proposed NCF standards support academic attainment at a significantly higher level than the previous standards across all subject areas and they are aligned with world-leading education systems. The NCF draws heavily on the context of Singapore, which has consistently maintained high outcomes.



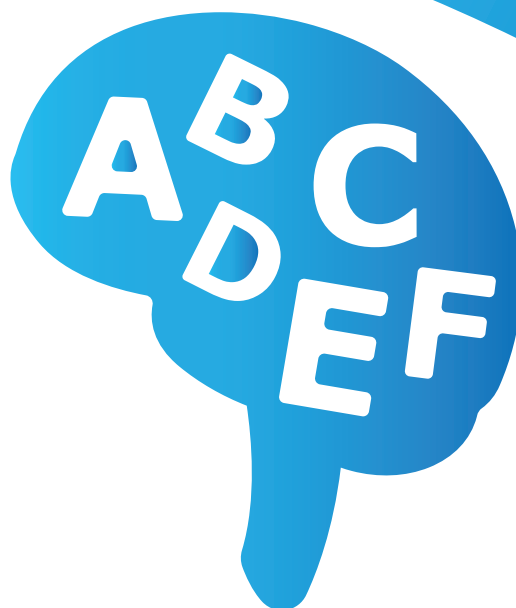


## WHAT WILL BE MODELS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION?

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT UZBEKISTAN WISHES TO ADOPT A MODEL OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION BY WHICH THERE IS AN EXPECTATION THAT ALL SCHOOL-LEAVERS WILL HAVE A HIGH DEGREE OF PROFICIENCY IN:

- UZ** **UZBEK**  
(the national language) (i.e. C2 Level);
- RU** **RUSSIAN**  
(a language of national, cultural, and economic significance) (i.e. C2 Level); and
- EN** **ENGLISH**  
(a language of global trade and culture) (i.e. C1 Level, on the understanding that B2 may stand as an interim target outcome).





It is understood that all second and foreign language education will be assessed in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), to allow for a consistent, language-neutral, approach to gauging learner attainment and progress in language competency (in relation to Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening).



This is aligned with the adoption of a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to second and foreign language education in Uzbekistan, in which interaction serves as both a learning mechanism, and the intended outcome, as well as making use of practical 'real life' 'authentic texts', and other source material.



In addition, it is expected that all learners be completely, and fluently, proficient in their native (mother tongue) language (i.e. C2 Level competency). It is important that this be maintained as a target, as there are reported cases of learners enrolled in schools in which the language of instruction is not their native language (e.g. native speakers of Uzbek, enrolled in schools in which Russian is the language of instruction) leaving school without a native-level of fluency (in terms of competency in Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening) in their mother tongue.



Language of instruction will be taught, from Early Years onwards, on a literacy basis, progressing to the study of language and literature more broadly as schooling progresses.



In all cases, the content of language education is to be informed by a thoroughgoing process of 'Cultural Mapping'. This builds on educational research into 'Cultural Literacy', particularly the work of E. D. Hirsch, i.e., the ability to understand, and engage effectively, with culture. In short, the process of cultural mapping entails exploring what 'Core Knowledge' a school-leaver requires to function as an effective learner (in future study, at university, or elsewhere), an effective economic contributor to society (as an employee, entrepreneur, etc.), and citizen (as a reader of newspapers, a participant in political process, and an individual engaged in cultural heritage), to ensure that all such knowledge is conveyed effectively throughout each learner's schooling.



This process, in relation to language, explores notions of basic literacy, as well as the cultural literacy essential for all learners completing their schooling in Uzbekistan. This applies to all languages (i.e., to Uzbek, to Russian, and to English, as well as mother-tongue where applicable), incorporating language, and literature, as appropriate.



## **WILL RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BE GIVEN 'SPECIAL STATUS'**

(ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ALLOCATION),

## **OR WILL IT BE TAUGHT AS SIMPLY ANOTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

(IF NOT THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION)?

*A large number of respondents to research questions posited by UNICEF (and/or by the international consultant) raised concerns about inconsistency with regard to Russian language policy. Given that Russian language retains a special status, current instructional time is not sufficient to allow for universal fluency.*

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Given the range of systemic issues currently impacting on language education in Uzbekistan, it would be helpful to review current language education policies. It is then essential for an explicit decision be made as to whether the 'special status' of Russian will remain for schools where Russian is not a language of instruction (and at least 5 hours a week should be then allocated for teaching), or whether it will be taught as a foreign language only in schools who have selected this option among other foreign languages, again with an allocation of 5 hours teaching time weekly.







## WHICH MODEL OF NCF WILL BE ADOPTED?

**A MODEL, AS RECOMMENDED IN THE NCF,  
THAT DRAWS ON A RANGE OF GOOD INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE,  
ADAPTED, AS APPROPRIATE, TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT.**

*This model provides an opportunity to build on strong work already undertaken elsewhere. It avoids duplicating effort, while allowing for a flexible approach that makes use of multiple sources, to fit it to the Uzbek context. While any approach's success in one context does not guarantee success in another, this model provides access to evidence-based approaches developed with the benefit of significant resources.*



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This model allows Uzbekistan to draw on well-funded, and carefully monitored educational approaches from Singapore and the United States of America, significantly reducing the costs that would arise from establishing a new model from scratch in Uzbekistan. In some subject areas this may require considerable adaptation (particularly in subjects with a higher degree of local and cultural content, such as literature, geography, and history), though this is much less marked in subject areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM), disciplines which are largely context neutral.



The NCF has specifically drawn on lessons from Singapore's education system, consistently one of the highest performing education systems in the world<sup>3</sup>.



Many countries, including UK, Australia, Israel and Canada, have drawn on the Singaporean model to drive up standards, particularly STEAM. While clearly distinct from the context of Uzbekistan, there are a number of relevant similarities (multilingual, multi-ethnic populous, focus on STEAM, Information and Communication Technology (ICT, and languages, etc.).



The NCF has also drawn upon the Common Core, introduced in the United States of America, in part to address concerns over historic declines in educational outcomes. It draws on an evidence-based approach to pedagogy, and its standards are reported to have significantly impacted on classroom teaching practice<sup>4</sup>.



There is a broad range of support relating to the effectiveness of Common Core in driving standards of attainment up across a range of subject areas<sup>5</sup>. While it is clear that the timeframe since implementation is insufficient to demonstrate long-term systemic impact, and there are challenges around the inconsistency of implementation of the Common Core<sup>6</sup>, findings do suggest a positive impact across a range of contexts<sup>7</sup>.



The Common Core and the NCF both emphasise 'Cultural Literacy', which may have particular relevance to introducing an effective new curriculum in Uzbekistan<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-38212070>

<https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/08/30/what-other-countries-can-learn-from-singapores-schools>

<sup>4</sup> <http://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/teaching-higher-report.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/teaching-higher-report.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2332858417691749>

<sup>7</sup> [https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/Changes in Math Instruction-Sep2018-Consortium.pdf](https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2019-01/Changes%20in%20Math%20Instruction-Sep2018-Consortium.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Hirsch, ED, Jr. (1987) *Cultural Literacy: What every American Needs to Know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



## HOW CAN THE CURRICULA FOR UZBEKISTAN-SPECIFIC SUBJECTS BE MADE AS COMPREHENSIVE AND APPROPRIATE FOR THE UZBEK CONTEXT AS POSSIBLE?

*A Cultural Literacy Mapping methodology is proposed to determine the content of the curricula and the associated standards for Uzbekistan specific subjects (native language and literature, Uzbek language and literature, ethics, history, and geography). Cultural literacy refers to the ability to understand and participate fluently in a given culture<sup>9</sup>. The ability to understand, interact and collaborate across different cultures has become a key skill in the 21st century. A Cultural Literacy Mapping (CLM) identifies a quasi-comprehensive list of concepts, facts and points of knowledge that are common for educated citizens of Uzbekistan.*

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### BROADLY CLM INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- 1 Selection of focus areas;
- 2 Review of existing standards, literature, and best practice;
- 3 Validation with subject experts and the public;
- 4 Compilation of a Cultural Literacy Dictionary;
- 5 Converting the Cultural Literacy Dictionary into a Subject Curriculum.



<sup>9</sup> Hirsch, ED, Jr. (1987) *Cultural Literacy: What every American Needs to Know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.



## WHAT SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARK TESTS, IF ANY, WILL BE USED IN CLASSROOMS?

**WHILE THE NCF HAS BEEN DEVELOPED IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, ITS EFFECTIVENESS COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY UNDERMINED IF ASSESSMENT WITHIN SCHOOLS IS NOT UNDERTAKEN TO A HIGH STANDARD:**

- ✓ If teachers mark work too generously, pupils may under-perform in external examinations;
- ✓ If teachers mark work to a standard that is overly challenging, pupils could also be disadvantaged;
- ✓ If teachers mark inconsistently, this could significantly undermine both internal assessment data, and school-level, regional, and national interventions.



Benchmarking tools are recommended to offset these risks, which they can do at a relatively low cost. Benchmark test models have implications for teaching methodologies and curriculum content, so this question must be addressed in order to finalize the NCF and educational standards.

Big sample-based international assessments such as PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS are primarily intended to compare pupil outcomes with those from other education systems. These assessments, while providing a useful tool for accountability, are not intended to serve as a comprehensive assessment tool, or a direct tool for informing classroom practice (though findings may shape approaches to teaching and learning, as well as influencing curriculum, and policy reforms).

The PISA logo consists of the letters 'PISA' in a stylized, multi-colored font. Each letter is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and red.The TIMSS logo features the letters 'TIMSS' in a white, serif font, centered within a dark blue rectangular box with a thin white horizontal line below the text.The PIRLS logo displays the letters 'PIRLS' in a white, serif font, centered within a red rectangular box with a thin white horizontal line below the text.

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## A NUMBER OF TOOLS CAN BE USED ON A MORE COMPREHENSIVE BASIS WITHIN SCHOOLS, INCLUDING:

- ✓ the International Benchmark Test (IBT), developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research, which offers computerised assessments developed for curriculum-neutral
- ✓ benchmarking of attainment and progress in core subjects;
- ✓ the Measures of Academic Progress Test (MAP), developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) which is norm-referenced to gauge student progress over time;
- ✓ the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4), developed by GL Assessment, which provides insights into children's' ability to reason across 4 fields: verbal, non-verbal, mathematical and spatial reasoning. The content of these tests is not curriculum-based.

*These could be utilised as existing products, or (at scale) collaboration with providers for localised iterations could be explored. Such an approach would provide a powerful tool for improving the quality of assessment data nationally.*



## **WILL SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION MODELS AND RELATED ELECTIVES BE INTRODUCED IN THE FINAL YEARS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION, EITHER BY ALIGNMENT, OR BY DIRECT USE OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED ASSESSMENT MODELS?**

*The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and pre-GCSE are recommended models, and the proposed NCF is aligned with them. Assuming that strong outcomes in learning and teaching for the core subjects are ensured, and national strategic priorities in relation to languages and STEAM capacity are well addressed, pupils could then be provided with additional choice in the final two (or potentially 4) years of their schooling.*

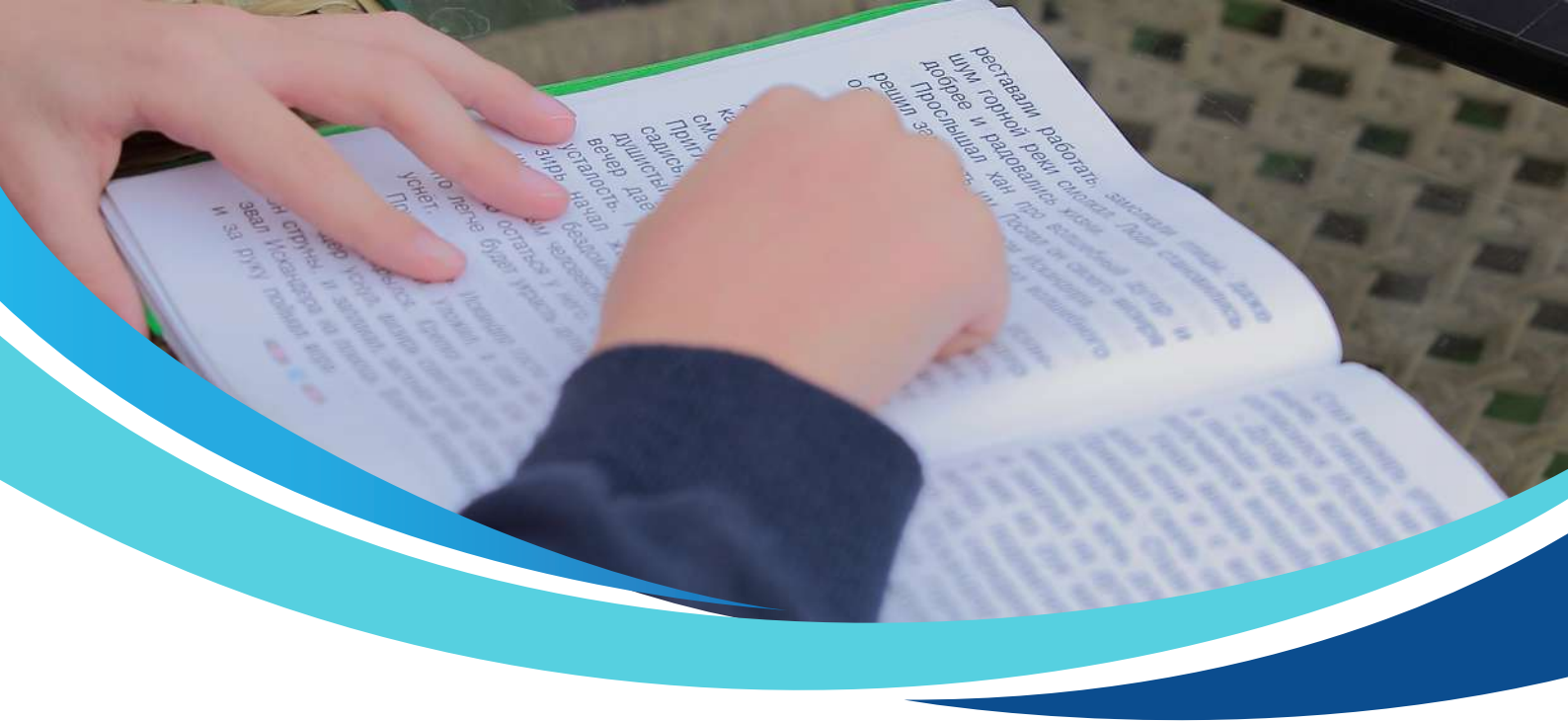


Pupils taking IGCSEs would usually study English, Mathematics, Sciences (single, double, or triple award), History and/or Geography, and an additional Language (other than mother tongue), as well as three to five additional subjects (depending on preference, and other factors). Alternatively, pupils can study to diploma level for: Advanced Placement or SAT Subject Tests, IB MYR or IB DP. Respective electives for obtaining these qualifications should be provided for students to choose from.



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## WHAT APPROACH, FOR PILOTING PURPOSES, WILL BE TAKEN TO LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES, INCLUDING TEXTBOOKS?

*A range of key choices must be made when preparing teaching and learning resources, including textbooks, to support the implementation of the NCF.*

These include:

- I DEVELOPING ENTIRELY NEW TEXTBOOKS:**

While this approach could potentially allow for highly localised content, it is likely to result in lower content quality, increased costs, and possible compliance challenges surrounding the tender process, contracting, contract management, etc. These issues can have a particularly negative effect during piloting, when time-frames are limited.
- II MAP EXISTING RESOURCES AGAINST THE NEW NCF;**

In this approach, a 'mapping' resource could be developed for use in schools. It would provide an overview of the various competencies to be addressed, and then link these to specific content in pre-existing textbooks, drawn from a range of sources. This could potentially provide savings, and make use of proven resources, but is perhaps less 'localized' than the previous model.
- III ADAPT (VIA TRANSLATION) HIGH QUALITY CONTENT FROM INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS.**

This model would use excellent, well-resourced materials, potentially offering higher quality, at a lower cost. Resourcing could then be directed towards ensuring the high standard translation needed for the multi-lingual context. This may entail direct negotiation with publishers to ensure value for money.



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## **WHAT WILL BE THE APPROACH TO PILOTING THE NEW CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS?**

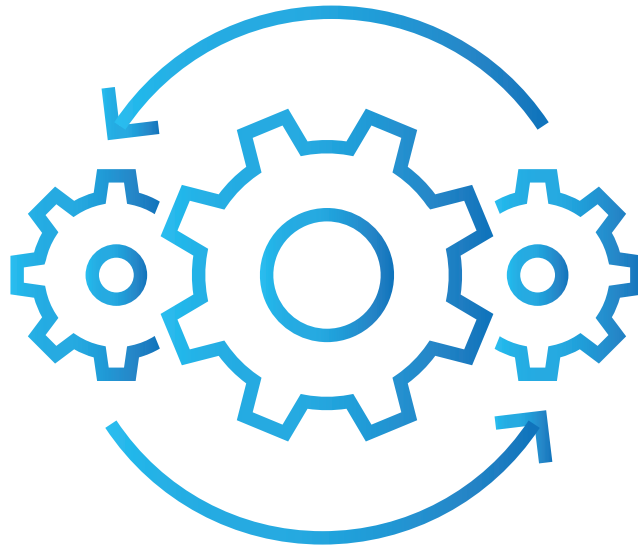
**RCTS UTILIZE A RESEARCH APPROACH BY WHICH A TRIAL IS ESTABLISHED IN TWO RANDOMLY SELECTED GROUPS, AN EXPERIMENTAL GROUP, AND A CONTROL GROUP, TO ASSESS THE EFFICACY OF AN INTERVENTION IN A MANNER THAT IS ROBUST, BY COMPARING THE OUTCOMES FOR THE TWO GROUPS. AN RCT PROTOCOL REPRESENTS THE GOLD STANDARD IN EXPERIMENTAL/INTERVENTION EFFICACY RESEARCH. IT HELPS RESEARCHERS ENSURE THAT THE RESULTS OBTAINED ARE CAUSED (RATHER THAN SIMPLY CORRELATING WITH) THE INTERVENTION, AS WELL AS PIN POINTING PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE INTERVENTION THAT CONTRIBUTE TO OR HINDER ITS SUCCESS.**



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Piloting will be a crucial step for the validation of the new curriculum and its approach. The use of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) is highly recommended and using as full an RCT protocol as possible will help ensure that the Ministry receives valid and valuable feedback on the new curriculum and is able to adjust its implementation strategy to meet the needs of the teachers and students adequately. This would also allow Uzbekistan to serve as a leader in policy research, potentially informing international policy-making. However, RCT has significant time and resourcing implications. The MOPE needs to decide on the use of RCT methodology, the scope of the pilot, and the resources to be allocated. If required by MOPE, UNICEF will engage an international expert to develop monitoring and evaluation methodology for piloting new curriculum and prepare a final report on results of evaluation.



Piloting will require careful planning to ensure it is fit for purpose, that it does not impact negatively on learners, and that it generates quality evidence to inform future programming. Such decisions should be made on the basis of expert advice; it is recommended that the Ministry works closely with UNICEF, and the international consultant, to finalize a clear piloting strategy, and that piloting decisions are not made until this consultation has generated clear recommendations.