SENIOR PHASE BENCHMARKING TOOL (SPBT) PROJECT

Purpose

1. This paper provides an update on the senior phase benchmarking project. Management Board is invited to:

- endorse the Senior Phase Benchmarking Project Board’s recommendation of SMART-ER - Smart Education Results as the new title.
- comment on and endorse the Project Board’s recommendations for 4 types of measure in the national dashboard. These measures relate to: increasing positive destinations/participation (measure 1); improving levels of literacy and numeracy (measure 2); raising educational attainment for all (measure 3); and tackling the link between deprivation and poor educational attainment (measure 4).

Background

2. The wider context for the project is set out in Annex A. Its main aims are to:

- provide an analytical tool based on nationally consistent data to support self-evaluation and continuous improvement in line with CfE.
- support CfE by providing active encouragement to users to be more flexible and innovative in planning the senior phase.
- provide a more focused, leaner system compared to STACs (Standard Tables and Charts.)
- be part of a range of evidence for evaluating performance and supporting improvement. This includes data from national and international surveys such as SSLN and PISA, local authority analyses and information from school inspections.

3. The project involves three main strands of work – technical development of the new analytical tool; a cultural change workstream in relation to the effective use of the tool as part of a range of evidence for improvement purposes and communications & engagement to raise awareness of the tool and encourage user feedback as the project progresses.

4. The main users of the tool will be local authorities, secondary schools and national education agencies. This will include classroom teachers in secondary schools. Parents, pupils and the wider public will not have direct access to the tool. However, some information derived from the tool will be made available, together with data from other sources, through Scottish
Schools Online, national statistics publications and school handbooks. Following finalisation of the measures, discussions will take place with stakeholders to define the range of information to be made available. This will include information made available through Education Scotland and SQA.

**Project Name**

5. The action from the CfE Management Board’s last meeting on 13 June 2012 on the senior phase benchmarking tool (SPBT) project is to “ensure that the project team is advised of the direction from Management Board to have a revised working title for the project. Specifically, this is to ensure that this helps stakeholders to understand the wider objectives of the project, not focusing on the tool in isolation. The title should not incorporate a reference to STACs.”

6. The Project Board discussed a new name for the analytical tool at their meeting on 21 June. Suggestions considered were:
   - SHARed – Statistics for higher attainment and results in education;
   - STARS – Sharing tables and results; and
   - SMART-ER – Smart Education Results.
The majority of Board members agreed on SMART-ER. The Board also welcomed the idea of providing an additional evolving strapline as the project is implemented. This will include a reference to the interactive element of the new tool and improving educational outcomes.

7. The Project Team has received a number of queries from local authorities and schools regarding future changes to STACs in relation to CfE. A resource pack consisting of a short presentation, leaflet and FAQs is being developed with the Project Board to provide some high level messages. It is planned to disseminate the leaflet at the Scottish Learning Festival and other events. The resource pack will be made available on the CfE area of Education Scotland’s website.

**Action:**

Over August 2012, Management Board was invited in correspondence to endorse the Project Board’s recommendation of SMART-ER: Smart Education Results as the new title. An alternative suggestion of Education Results Analysis (ERA) was recently made. However, the majority of members who responded to the project team’s query on their preference wished to use the name SMART-ER. **Does MB agree?**

**Measures in the National Dashboard**

8. The tool uses the concept of dashboards to encourage users to consider a range of information and provide a concise picture of the position of the school or authority. This approach promotes further investigation
through guided analysis and facilitates a positive cycle of self-evaluation and improvement.

9. The dashboards are intended to be used at different levels from national through to local (i.e. classroom teachers; schools; local authorities; national education agencies; Scottish Government.) They provide users – each at the level most appropriate to their interests and needs – with key at-a-glance performance information and a means of benchmarking that information in order to show users the areas where they can improve. The dashboards also act as an gateway to the rest of the detailed evidence included within the tool. The tool is being designed in such a way as to encourage users (whether classroom teacher, Head Teacher, or authority) to assess the information against a carefully selected and well-rounded array of data to help improve performance, rather than just focus narrowly on one or two measures.

10. SMART-ER will contain a range of measures, with some being national measures and others being local measures which are tailored at local level to the needs of schools and local authorities. The national measures will be based upon nationally consistent measurement points and all school data. The national information will be made available to all users. The local measures for secondary schools and local authorities, not are generally comparable at a national level, will be restricted to the school itself, its parent authority and national education agencies (as appropriate). Schools and local authorities will have the flexibility to develop their own data-sharing arrangements with their improvement partners. These arrangements differ from the current STACs in that SMART-ER will be made available to a wider group of users including classroom teachers in secondary schools. SMART-ER will also bring together national and local information in a clearer and more accessible manner than STACs. The project team is developing transition arrangements from STACs to SMART-ER. This will include ensuring that previous data is reformatted and available in SMART-ER at launch in August 2014.

11. The Project Board met on 21 June and agreed the following recommendations:

**Destination/participation of pupils after leaving school (measure 1)** – Measure 1 will focus on initial destinations but future work will provide data on sustained destinations. Work will also be undertaken on incorporating contextual information on local and national economic circumstances. This will include providing a link to Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics.

**Improving levels of literacy and numeracy (measure 2)** – Measure 2 will cover attainment in both literacy and numeracy at the end of the senior phase. A short-life group is being established to provide recommendations on the range of qualifications and awards to be included. The Project Board recommend that the measure focuses on attainment at SCQF level 4 or better and SCQF level 5 or better in order to support CfE’s aim of improving levels of literacy and numeracy. Information on attainment at other levels and on
literacy and numeracy as separate measures can be made available within the local authority and school dashboards.

**Improving the educational attainment of all learners (measure 3)/ Tackling the link between deprivation and poor educational attainment (measure 4)** - Measure 3 will focus on improving attainment for all pupils. Measure 4 will focus on tackling disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to higher attainers, and closing the achievement gap between them. This measure includes a socio-economic gradient of attainment mapped against SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) indicators and destinations data.

**Balancing quality and quantity of attainment under CfE**  This is best understood as an “indicator theme” rather than fully part of the measures for the national dashboard. The Project Board recommended that the Project Team develop options on providing an “indicator bar” running across the bottom of the dashboard to assist local authorities and schools in considering issues of quality and quantity of attainment. This could cover attainment based on the 8 curricular areas and by specific groups of pupils such as Looked After Children and those with additional support needs.

**Annex B** provides an indication of how the measures compare to those contained in STACs and how they will support CfE. The annex also provides an indication of the range of information currently made available in national statistical publications. **Annex C** provides a mock-up of how the national dashboard and measures would appear to users. *(Please note that the data used is for illustrative purposes only.)*

12. The tool will use a “virtual schools” model to help local authorities and schools undertake self-evaluation and improvement activities. Virtual schools is a different approach to the comparator schools model currently used for STACs. The virtual schools approach involves creating a virtual comparator for any given group of pupils. The tool will enable users to select specific characteristics of a given group of pupils (e.g. gender, age range, deprivation profile, ASL.) It will then generate from the wider pupil population a virtual group of pupils that matches as closely as possible the selected characteristics. This will enable users to analyse the attainment of the given group of pupils with their virtual comparators.

13. In addition to virtual school comparators, the tool will also match users with actual improvement partners. Improvement partners are based upon the comparator school model and will enable local authorities and schools to develop collaborative relationships with those in relatively similar circumstances to themselves, for follow-up and sharing of good practice where practitioners would find this helpful.

**Action:**
**MB is invited to comment on and endorse the Project Board’s recommendations for measures in the national dashboard relating to increasing positive destinations (measure 1); improving levels of literacy**
and numeracy (measure 2); improving educational attainment for all (measure 3) and tackling the link between deprivation and poor educational attainment (measure 4).

14. The requirements gathering process to develop the measures has taken around a month longer than originally anticipated. A decision from Management Board would be helpful to enable technical work to proceed on developing a prototype to begin testing with users. Given the interactive nature of the new tool, it is crucial that sufficient time is available for a rigorous programme of user testing (and, if necessary, subsequent alterations) to ensure that the final product meets users’ requirements. The programme of user testing will include the development of templates for local authority and school dashboards.

Senior Phase Benchmarking Tool Project Team
Learning Directorate
Scottish Government
ANNEX A

SELF-EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CfE

The self-evaluation and improvement framework for CfE was set out in *Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment*

*Building the Curriculum 5* noted that Scotland has a strong culture of self-evaluation. Improvement through self-evaluation is embedded across Scottish education. The practices of reflection on performance, learning together, sharing good practice and planning for improvement are even more essential if the aspirations of *Curriculum for Excellence* are to be achieved.

*Building the Curriculum 5* also highlighted the need for Scotland to have a comprehensive system for reporting against standards and expectations. This system should provide information on achievements of individual learners at class, school, local authority and national levels. The system should be aligned fully with the purposes of learning and should provide information on performance which can be compared with local, national and international benchmarks.

Within the context of *Curriculum for Excellence*, benchmarking at local authority and national levels should:

> prompt reflection on practice
> be based on a broad range of valid and reliable information
> use tools and exemplification through the National Assessment Resource and moderation practices
> relate performance to that of young people with similar needs and backgrounds in other schools and authorities

*Building the Curriculum 5* highlighted the following sources of evidence for self-evaluation and improvement purposes:

- School and local authority assessment information used appropriately through effective quality assurance and moderation procedures
- Education Scotland’s inspection processes
- SQA’s quality assurance processes for National Qualifications
- Information from national and international surveys including the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
As part of ensuring that self-evaluation and improvement procedures are aligned with CfE, *Building the Curriculum 5* included a commitment to update and adapt STACs (Standard Tables and Charts) so that it is fully aligned to Curriculum for Excellence. The SPBT project has been established to fulfill this commitment.

The Scottish Government is also seeking to progress a broader agenda to improve the performance of the education system in order to raise attainment for all and to tackle the association between deprivation and poor attainment. A key element of the project work which will be developed in progressing that agenda will be informing and enabling teachers' self-reflective practices. The new regulations on School Handbooks will ensure that schools consider how best to share a broader range of information with parents which reflect Curriculum for Excellence, including performance, ethos and key achievements. This reflects parents' views during the consultation on the School Handbook. In accordance with the new regulations, schools must also signpost parents to where they can get further local and national performance information. This would include Scottish Schools Online, Education Scotland information, and national statistical publications.

Guidance will be issued to Headteachers and Parent Councils on 12 September to help them consider how they can best reflect their own school’s performance and improvement as well as engage with their own parent community to ensure that the information reflects their own circumstances and needs. Further work will be needed to ensure that Scottish Schools Online supports the process at school level and reflects the broader agenda of continuous improvement of the education system, as well as working well with the SPBT project. The provision of a broader range of information from schools and on Scottish Schools Online, as well as in Inspection reports, along with the engagement process which supports the preparation of the new School Handbooks, should help parents understand the broader context of learning and performance in their schools and for their children.
## ANNEX B

### What is it about SMART-ER that will help to deliver on CfE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Statistical Publication</th>
<th>Current STACs Measure</th>
<th>New SMART-ER Measure</th>
<th>How will the new measure support CfE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destinations of school leavers and follow up</td>
<td>Not available.</td>
<td>Increasing Positive Destinations - (% of school leavers in a positive destination)</td>
<td>This outcome has been included for the first time in an online benchmarking tool and supports CfE’s focus on improving learners’ progression onto positive destinations/participation after leaving school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Attainment S4-S6</td>
<td>By level and stage on English and Maths.</td>
<td>Improving levels of literacy and numeracy - (% achieving SCQF level 4 or better)</td>
<td>CfE emphasises the continuing development of literacy and numeracy skills. The SMART-ER measure provides added value by enabling local authorities and schools to undertake more in-depth analysis than is currently the case. Current measures are based wholly upon National Qualifications in English and Maths. The SMART-ER measure will incorporate a wider range of qualifications and awards included in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The measure will cover attainment in both literacy and numeracy at the end of the senior phase. (Information on literacy and numeracy as separate measures will be available within the deeper levels of the tool.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average tariff score of S4 pupils</td>
<td>Various points based measures including total and mean by stage and quintile.</td>
<td>Improved attainment for all – (average tariff points for each group (top/middle/bottom)</td>
<td>The SMART-ER measure is based upon overall quality of achievement at the end of school education rather than at the end of individual year stages from S4-S6 as in the current measures. This adds value by providing active encouragement to users to be flexible and innovative in planning the senior phase of education. Current measures are also wholly based upon achievement in National Qualifications. The SMART-ER</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
measures are based upon a wider range of qualifications and awards and therefore encourage a greater focus on improving attainment for all learners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not available.</th>
<th>Addressing attainment and deprivation – (based on the idea of the social gradient across SIMD and the link to destinations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average tariff score of S4 pupils</td>
<td>Not available.</td>
<td>The SMART-ER measure adds value by enabling local authorities and schools to collate a broader range of data and undertake more in-depth analysis of the &quot;gap&quot; in attainment than is currently easily available. Unlike the current measure that is based wholly upon achievement in National Qualifications, the SMART-ER measure allows the mapping of attainment data to destinations/participation and other information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Attainment S4-S6</td>
<td>Not available.</td>
<td>Indicators of quality and quantity – (displayed as an ‘indicator bar’ illustrative of many elements of breadth, depth, challenge, experience) ¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CfE emphasises the need to assess breadth, challenge and application of learning. The SMART-ER indicators add value by enabling local authorities and schools to create a “balanced scorecard” based upon quality and range of attainment. This provides more flexibility than current measures and enables users to focus upon the needs of particular groups of pupils e.g. looked-after children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX C

MOCK-UP OF NATIONAL DASHBOARD AND MEASURES

The screenshot above is taken from the prototype web interface for the new tool. **The measures are indicative only as technical definition and implementation is still in progress.**

Users can click on any graph to begin their guided analysis by being presented with further information relevant to the dashboard measure. This additional information will encourage users to consider how other factors may influence the measure they have selected.
ANNEX D

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SPBT PROJECT BOARD

Maggie Tierney (Chair) – Scottish Government

Craig Munro (Fife Council) – ADES (up to September 2012)
Margo Williamson (South Ayrshire Council) – ADES
Colin Sutherland – SLS
Charles McTrusty – EIS
Alan Armstrong – Education Scotland (up to August 2012)
Mary Hoey – Education Scotland (up to August 2012)
Norman Emerson – Education Scotland (from September 2012)
Fiona Robertson – Education Scotland (from September 2012)
Karen McCallum – SQA
Angela Davidson – Scottish Government
Brenda Calder – Scottish Government
Katie Beattie – Scottish Government (from September 2012 onwards)