

Services for Curriculum & Assessment Innovation

Turning education and skills policy into practice



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Education and skills matter to individuals and society alike. AlphaPlus www.alphaplus.co.uk works with governments, regulators, certification bodies and publishers to develop innovative education and assessment services that help improve life chances for learners. Our work is evidence-led, and focused on transformation – through technology, innovative curricula and approaches that work for all educators and the learners they serve. We are passionate about making “opportunities for all” a reality.

AlphaPlus is part of the AQA Group www.aqa.org.uk – a global leader in school standards and assessment.

Services

Educational Standards & Curriculum

Educational curricula, occupational and professional standards that reflect the needs of 21st Century learners.

- + Citizenship
- + Life skills
- + Maths, English & science
- + Professional standards for medics, lawyers, accountants
- + Teacher selection and training
- + Vocational and technical frameworks
- + Technology-enabled learning resources

Assessment & Certification

Recognised excellence in the design, development and deployment of modern qualifications and assessments that unlock learner potential.

- + National onscreen adaptive statutory assessments for schools
- + Formative assessments for publishers
- + Professional assessments including OSCEs, SJTs and capstone assessment
- + Strategies for national certification programmes in schools & colleges
- + Apprenticeships & work-based learning
- + Training and capacity building for certification bodies

Evaluation & Research

Trusted by governments to measure the impact of educational reform and innovation. Research and evidence-led, turning policy into practice.

- + Qualitative & quantitative mixed methods research
- + Randomised controlled trials
- + Psychometric analysis to quality assure and set standards for assessment
- + Impact evaluation
- + Literature reviews
- + Support for policy and strategy makers

Schools

We work with school leaders, teachers and children of all ages to provide learning and assessment services that improve attainment for all.

Vocational

We work with training providers in college and workplace settings, and with certification bodies to develop programmes of learning assessments that reflect the needs of 21st Century learners.

Professional

We work with educators and professional and regulatory bodies to support the measurement of professional competence.

About AlphaPlus

Our Vision

We are recognised for excellence in design, development and deployment of curricula, qualifications and assessments, and in the evaluation of their performance and impact.

High levels of expertise coupled with honesty, practicality and integrity underpin all our work.

Founded in 2003, we are based in Manchester, England.

With our team of 50 staff and 500 specialist associates, we have delivered over 400 projects for clients in the education sector.

We work across the breadth of education, with a focus on standards, curriculum and assessment – the key inputs and outputs that support the core activities of all educational institutions: leadership, the environment for learning, and pedagogy and quality of teaching.

Who we are

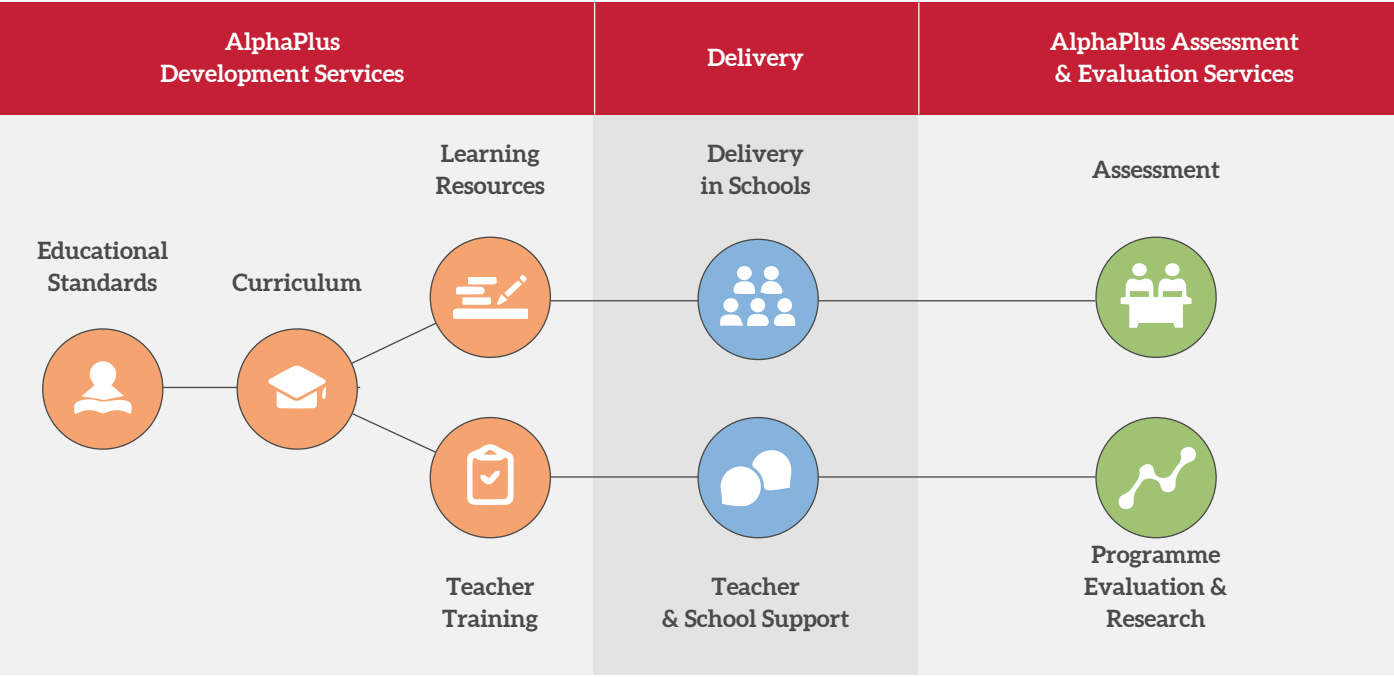
We are educationalists with a strong commitment to improving teaching, learning and assessment for all, based on intellectual integrity, sound evidence and innovative approaches

We are committed to being a dependable, accountable, honest and loyal partner for our clients

We are committed to enabling our clients to perform well by being reasonable, flexible and responsive, and by helping them to deliver

We are diligent, resilient and committed to achieving educational impact

We are trusted by governments, regulators and professional organisations to innovate in education



About AQA

AlphaPlus is part of the AQA Group - an educational charity. AQA is the UK’s biggest exam board, setting and marking around half the GCSEs and A-levels taken in England each year. Its qualifications are highly valued by employers and universities around the world. They are taught mainly in schools and colleges and include GCSEs, AS and A-levels, the Extended Project Qualification and Technical Awards. We deliver school qualifications in over 40 countries – more than 10 million each year, set and marked by 30,000 teachers and lecturers.



Our clients



Example Clients

School Education

UK

- + Department for Education
- + Standards and Testing Agency
- + Hodder Rising Stars
- + GL Assessment
- + Education Endowment Foundation
- + Governments of England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland

International

- + Crown Prince Court in Abu Dhabi
- + British Council
- + International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO)
- + Ministry of Education in Bulgaria

Vocational Education

UK

- + Education and Training Foundation
- + Ofqual
- + VTCT
- + Federation of Awarding Bodies
- + NCFE

International

- + ADEK
- + ITQAN
- + City and Guilds
- + Brunei Shell Petroleum
- + World Bank
- + DFID UKAid
- + USAid
- + Ministries of Education

Professional Education

UK

- + Nursing and Midwifery Council
- + Bar Standards Board
- + National Assessment & Accreditation Scheme (NAAS) for Child & Family Social Workers
- + General Pharmaceutical Council
- + Solicitors Regulation Authority
- + Royal Colleges of Medicine
- + Accountancy Bodies

International

- + World Bank
- + Saudi Commission for Health Specialties
- + European Society of Cardiology
- + RIPE

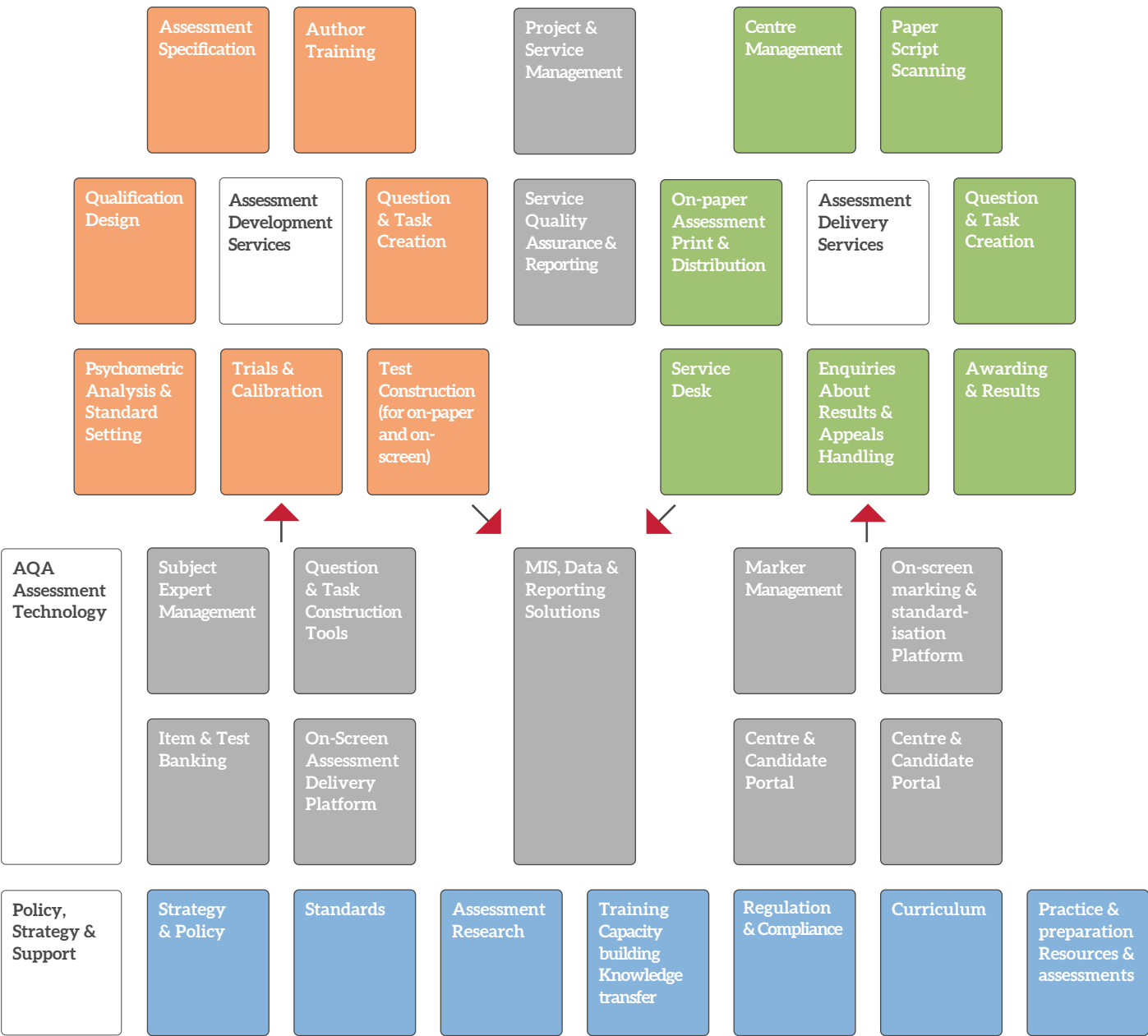
Assessment Services

We support our clients in planning, developing, delivering and evaluating their assessments. Our commitment is to *make educational assessments better* and there are examples of our work on the following pages. Our services are separated into the four clusters of activity shown below.

Through this model, we support:

- + Onscreen assessment
 - + Onpaper assessment
 - + Practical skills assessment
- + Summative assessment & exams
 - + Formative assessment to support learning
 - + Diagnostic assessment

AQA-AlphaPlus Assessment Services



Assessment Services

Assessment Development

Great assessments start with clarity around purpose and the best choice of assessment methods. We design and develop world-class assessments. Our trials and psychometric statistics teams provide the evidence base that proves the assessments work as intended.

Assessment Delivery Services

We support centres and candidates from registration through to results, including for computer-marked and human-marked assessments. We support centre-based and remote-proctored assessment. We work with clients to tailor solutions to meet specific and complex requirements.

Technology for Assessment

We have an outstanding reputation for delivering onscreen assessment in the real world. Our success is built on understanding how to select and deploy the best technology – either from our inhouse capability or from trusted partners. We help our customers make on-screen assessment work at scale.

Assessment Support services

Our certification clients also rely on us for strategy and policy work – for example defining standards, undertaking best practice research, supporting regulation and compliance, and providing training and support.

Turnkey services

AlphaPlus runs high profile end-to-end assessment programmes for clients. We also provide the specialist services shown to certification organisations who need additional capacity and capability, or assistance with service modernisation.



The AlphaPlus team are always professional and supportive, and have been able to adapt to short-notice projects to help us deliver our business goals. We would definitely recommend others to work with AlphaPlus.

Hodder Rising Stars

AlphaPlus are able to quickly understand our challenges without needing to be provided with detailed explanations of what we do as an assessment body and what we might want to achieve. They understand assessment and AOs so are well placed to help.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales

In 2018, we contracted AlphaPlus to produce a research report and good practice guide on effective mark schemes in knowledge-based qualifications. The quality of both documents was very high and feedback from awarding bodies on the usefulness of the good practice guide has been very positive.

Qualifications Wales

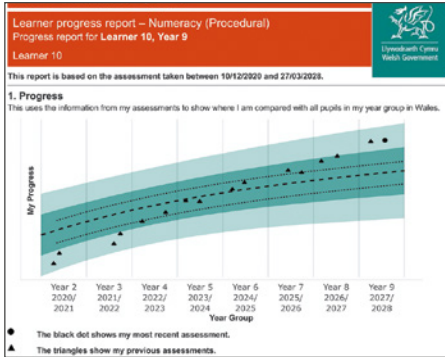
Case Study: National Assessment in Schools

In Wales, all children aged 7-14 take national assessments in numeracy, reading and numerical problem-solving. These assessments are designed to identify areas where children and teachers need to focus their efforts in order to make progress.

These award-winning assessments are delivered onscreen – over one million tests each year. The assessments are adaptive – adjusting to children’s performance, and accessible – there are no paper versions: all children are able to take the tests on-screen. AlphaPlus delivers a similar programme in Scotland and works in England on developing and trialling national statutory assessments.



Best use of formative assessment



Case Study:
Support for professional
bodies technology selection

Most professional bodies use technology for elements of their accreditation assessment. AlphaPlus supports these organisations in selecting and deploying the best technology, including for assessment development and delivery. We have worked with over 30 professional bodies across medical, accountancy, legal, financial and engineering.



Case Study:
National assessments
in India

Working with the British Council, we supported CBSE (a national education board for India, with more than 27,000 schools) and their teacher and examiner community in development of assessment for India's new national curriculum. We trained and supported around 200 test developers and 40 assessment designers.



Case Study:
Medical Assessment

AlphaPlus works with professional bodies in health and medical assessment. For example, we provide onscreen knowledge tests and OSCE practical assessments for qualifying nurses and midwives, for the UK's Nursing and Midwifery Council. We work with healthcare specialists to develop and trial assessments, and we support Universities and NHS Trusts in delivering these certifications. We provide psychometric analytical services for many branches of medicine to ensure assessments meet rigorous quality criteria.



Case Study:
Teacher selection
assessments

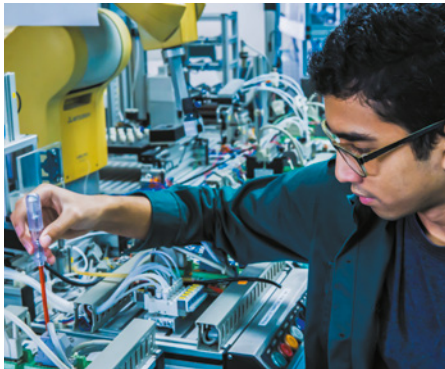
High-quality teacher recruitment and selection is essential to sustaining an education system. AlphaPlus provides on-screen tests of teacher aptitude for government recruitment as part of a World Bank initiative. These tests will complement the existing teacher recruitment system, which is composed of a written exam aiming to identify academic skills and an oral exam aiming at identifying oral pedagogic practical skills.

Educational Standards and Curriculum

AlphaPlus provides full service curriculum design and development for bespoke learning and accreditation programmes, from standards frameworks, to curriculum specifications and learning resources, delivery support and assessment and certification.

We pride ourselves on a simple and straightforward approach to consulting projects – we prefer working on-site with our clients, and building teams that major on co-creation, international experts working with specialist local educators who understand the context. These are the keys to success in the case studies presented overleaf.

The challenge for modern curricula is to ensure that the programme is relevant and engaging for all learners, and that educators have the skills, resources and leadership to deliver successfully. We prioritise understanding context as a first step in any curriculum development.



Factors affecting curriculum design

Working around the world supporting the development of new curricula, we find the following two key themes are common:

Functionality

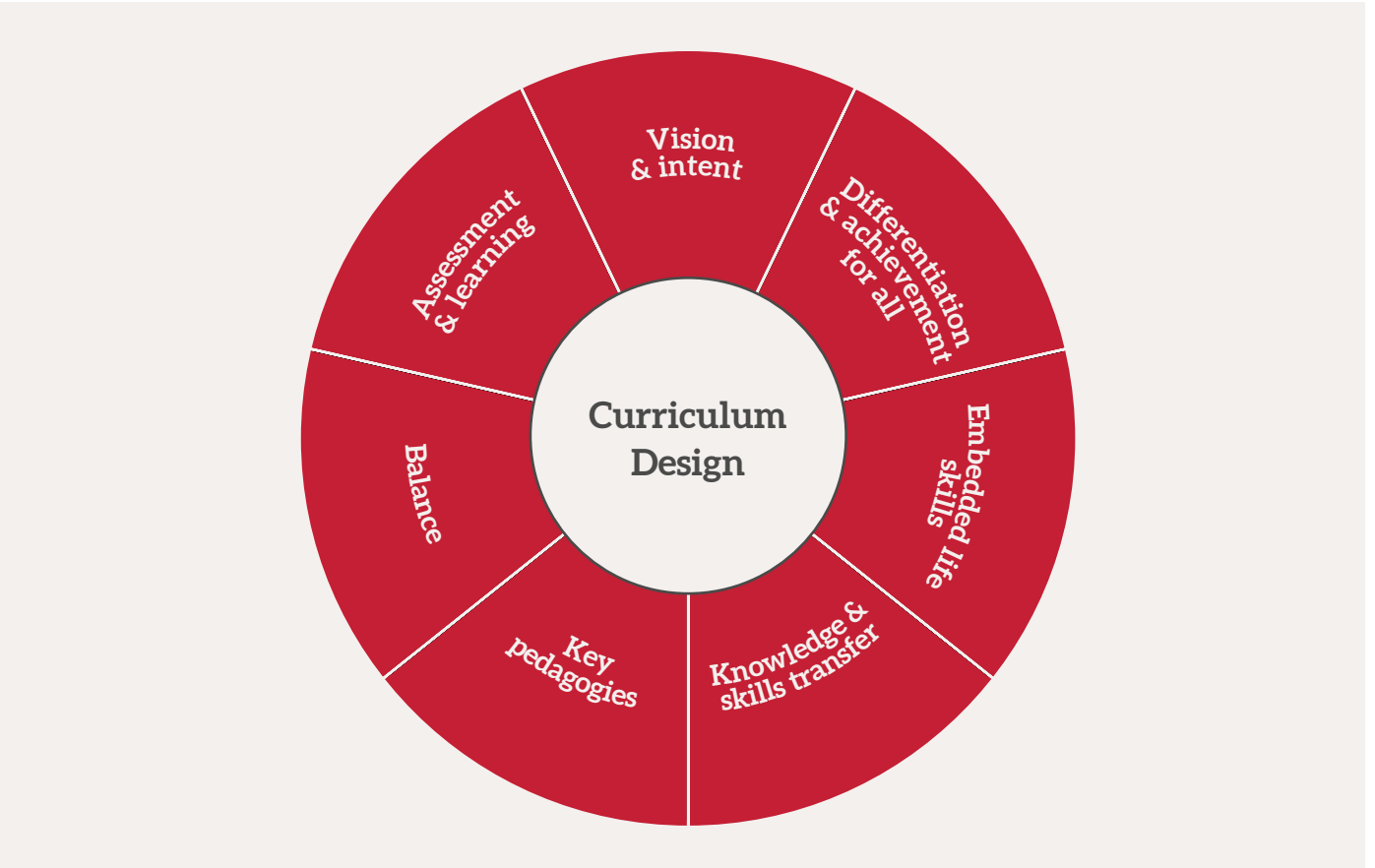
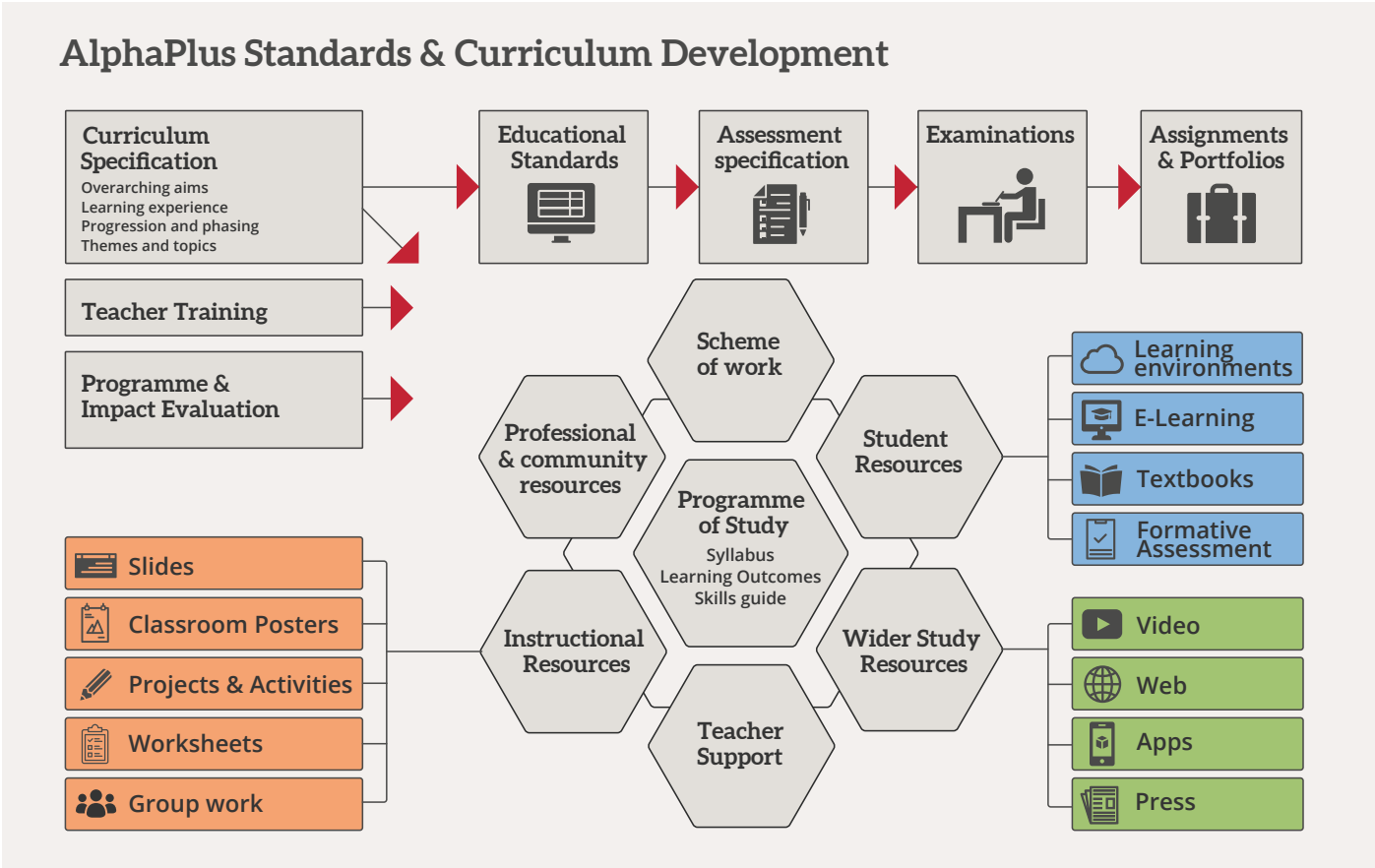
This can be characterised in many ways, but it essentially involves embedding more skills and functionality into the curriculum – moving away from knowledge-heavy curriculums and away from assessment focused on recall of information toward a curriculum where students use their knowledge and their skills in applying that knowledge to deal with problems more holistically, and in a range of contexts.

Functionality can include elements of mastery-based approaches and can require schools to follow pedagogies that support cross-curricular, project- and discovery-based learning. While knowledge remains important, applying that knowledge becomes critical to success.

Clarity of vision and intent

Education systems increasingly focus on clarity about the “intent” of curriculum (i.e. What are students to achieve at each stage?) rather than simply working to a standard list of subjects and topics. This clarity of intent tends to focus on learner capabilities – for example, “knowledgeable learners who can build their own knowledge base independently” or “confident communicators in written and spoken form”. These high-level intents provide a strong framework in which to develop the curriculum for subjects, the embedded functionality within them, and the pedagogical approaches used to teach them – they provide an excellent link between teaching quality and curriculum.

Clarity is also important in supporting good assessment of students and inspection of schools – if the curriculum designers are clear about what is to be learned and why, then it is easier for organisations measuring the quality of learning (for individuals or at school level). AlphaPlus is often selected to work on curricula where clear and evidencable standards of performance are required.

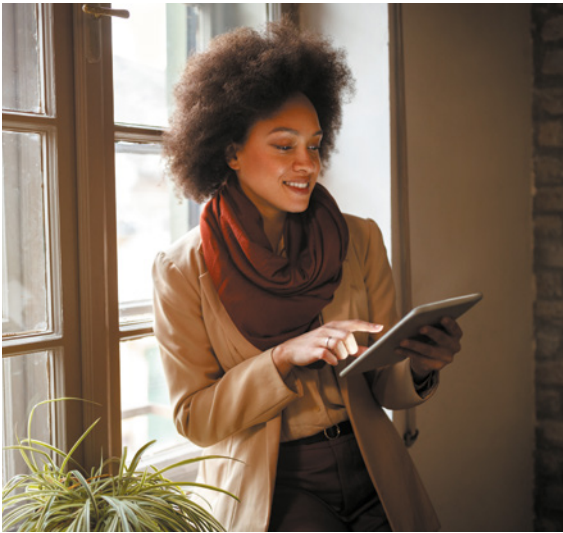


Case Studies

UK National Programme: Essential Digital Skills

Rapid changes in digital technologies affect all aspects of work and life. England's Essential Digital Skills Framework defines the skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world. AlphaPlus led the development of the Essential Digital Skills Framework which includes: communicating digitally, handling information and content, transacting, problem-solving, and being safe and legal online. Digital skills are assessed as a core skill, alongside literacy and numeracy, as part of most UK vocational programmes. AlphaPlus supports awarding organisations and regulatory authorities in designing effective assessments for Digital Skills.

<https://tinyurl.com/3mmfzstp>



Abu Dhabi : Tour Guide Licensure Programme

The Abu Dhabi Department of Culture & Tourism <https://tcaabudhabi.ae/> promotes heritage and culture and manages tourism. As part of this, the Department train and license tour guides through online and face-to-face training programmes. AlphaPlus were commissioned to develop the curriculum, training resources and certification processes for the tourist guide licensing programme. The programme provides extensive knowledge about Abu Dhabi but also supports communication skills, the skills of presenting information to tourists, and group management.



Itqan Institute: Engineering Inspection Programme

The Inspection Technology and Quality Assurance National Institute (ITQAN) is a state-of-the-art institute providing world-class training programmes for young Inspection Engineers in the energy sector. ITQAN offers a 2-year diploma with five different specialist options: Non- Destructive Testing, Welding Inspector, Electrical Inspector, Mechanical Inspector and Civil Inspector.

AlphaPlus designed and developed these courses, and their certification programmes working with Saudi ARAMCO lead inspectors and City & Guilds. We provided around 4,500 hours of curriculum teaching resources, labs, workbooks and assessments.

<https://tinyurl.com/mryv3z4n>



UAE National Curriculum: Moral Education Programme

The Moral Education Programme is an innovative curriculum for young people of all nationalities and ages in the UAE, based on universal principles and values that reflect the shared experiences of humanity.

Working with the Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi, AlphaPlus developed this important national curriculum innovation for all children aged 5 to 16 in UAE. The curriculum reflects the very best in citizenship education worldwide and is configured for the needs of children in the Emirates. Working with City & Guilds, AlphaPlus also provides the assessment for national sample-based monitoring of curriculum implementation and impact.



Support for the teaching profession

As well as developing curricula, AlphaPlus also provides support for rollout: supporting the teaching profession with training and resources. For example in England, we are training around 1500 senior college tutors in providing coaching and mentoring to newly qualified tutors in their teams. We deliver this national programme on behalf of the UK's Education & Training Foundation – the national body for college development. Mentoring - The Education and Training Foundation et-foundation.co.uk. Working with the World Bank, we have developed psychometric assessment tools for aptitude-based selection of prospective teachers for teacher training programmes.



Specialist Consultant for Ministries Of Education

As the consulting arm of AQA, one of the world's largest assessment organisations, we are trusted to advise on curriculum, standards and assessments by governments around the world. Our team have deep experience in curriculum modernisation, particularly in numeracy, literacy, science, digital skills, and 21st Century curriculum areas such as critical thinking, citizenship, creativity and growth mindset. We work across primary and secondary schools, vocational and workplace learning, and professional education sectors. We are educationalists with a strong commitment to improving teaching, learning and assessment, based on intellectual integrity, sound evidence and innovative approaches.






Excellence in educational assessment

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