# Curriculum and Scope and Sequence Development for Literacy and Numeracy: Guiding Principles Checklist

This document offers a set of guidelines in the form of a checklist to aid governments, implementing partners, and other stakeholders in the process of developing a curriculum and scope and sequence for foundational literacy and numeracy. It is intended as a companion to the How-to Guide on Curriculum and Scope and Sequence Development for Literacy and Numeracy. This checklist is divided into two parts: Part 1 focuses on the curriculum, and Part 2 focuses on the scope and sequence.

## KEY TERMS

| KEY TERM | EXPLANATION |
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| **Curriculum** | A document that outlines what students are expected to learn in each grade, the methods of instruction, and ways to measure their understanding and proficiency in each subject or area of study. It often includes:<br><br>• **WHAT:** The skills children are expected to know by the end of each school year<br><br>• **WHEN:** Guidance on pacing and how to distribute the skills throughout the school year<br><br>• **HOW:** Textbooks, supplemental materials, teachers' guides, suggested instructional activities, and information on what instruction should look like |
| **Syllabus (plural: syllabi)** | A curricular document that indicates in detail the learning objectives or competencies for students by grade (and often by week or term) for a particular subject or area of study. It might also include other information such as themes and instructional approaches. |
| **Productive school weeks** | Weeks when actual instruction is taking place, excluding exam weeks, registration and closing week, holidays, and similar events. |
| **Productivity order of letters (graphemes)** | An ordering of letter-sound (grapheme-phoneme) correspondences based on each grapheme's relative usefulness in constructing meaningful words, which is related to the grapheme's appearance in high-frequency words and overall frequency in the language. Note: Teaching order does not always follow productivity order exactly due to additional considerations such as which letter sounds are easiest to pronounce and hear in isolation, which ones are most similar to those in a previously learned orthography, etc. However, all else equal, taking productivity into account in the teaching order helps students be able to read and write more words from earlier on in the literacy lessons. |
| **Teaching order of letters (graphemes)** | The order in which letter-sound (grapheme-phoneme) correspondences are taught to students. Several considerations influence the teaching order, including each grapheme's relative usefulness in making meaningful words (see productivity order), salience and contrast of the first few symbols, relationships to any previously learned orthographies, etc. |

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| **Decodable words** | Words that contain only the letter-sound correspondences that have been previously taught and can therefore be accurately sounded out. More information can be found here (pages 2–3). |
| **Sight words** | Words that have one or more letters or spelling patterns that have not yet been taught to students, or irregular spellings that cannot be systematically decoded. The words are taught to be recognized "by sight," as a whole, without decoding. |
| **Language of instruction** | The language(s) used as the medium for teaching. For lower-primary classes, the preferred language is often the language that students speak at home. |
| **Scope and sequence** | A document that details the content to be learned (scope) and the order in which it is to be learned (sequence). For an example, see here. |
| **Universal design for learning (UDL)** | A framework intended to optimize teaching and learning for children of all needs and abilities, especially children with disabilities. Guidance on how to incorporate UDL principles into early grade reading programs can be found here. |

# PART 1: Curriculum and Syllabi

Curriculum and syllabi outline the overall learning objectives for each grade, typically organized by term. These documents play a crucial role in the development of educational materials for teaching and learning. It is thus essential for curriculum guidelines and syllabi to align with contemporary best practices and principles on teaching reading, writing, and mathematics.

## Curriculum Checklist

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| **What is the status of the curriculum or syllabi for the subjects of literacy and math?** | |
| | One or more documents are available that outline what students are expected to learn in each grade for the subjects of literacy and math. |
| | The documents provide guidance on how to distribute the learning objectives and content throughout the school year. |
| | The documents provide guidance on instructional approaches and activities for each target skill. |
| | The documents provide guidance on measuring the mastery of the learning objectives and on assessment (frequency, integrated practices, using the information to improve learning, etc.). |
| | For literacy, the curriculum addresses all of the five core components of reading, plus writing. |
| | For math, the curriculum addresses all the foundational domains (i.e., numbers, operations, algebra, measurement, geometry, spatial awareness, and statistics and data analysis). |
| | The documents reflect clear and appropriate developmental progressions, with content becoming systematically more difficult at a reasonable pace. |
| | The documents are reviewed and updated on a regular cycle to reflect current best practices in the teaching of literacy and math. |
| **Do the curriculum guidelines or syllabi indicate the time allocated to literacy and math?** | |
| | The documents indicate the number of productive school weeks per term and per school year. |
| | The documents indicate the number of hours in a week allocated to literacy and math instruction in each grade. |

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| **Do the curriculum guidelines or syllabi provide information on the following key topics for literacy instruction?** | |
| | The documents provide learning objectives for print knowledge, the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, alphabetics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension), and writing in the early grades. |
| | The documents take productivity into consideration in the teaching order of letters (graphemes), or if the teaching order is not prescribed in the documents, they recommend that productivity be taken into account when establishing the teaching order. |
| | The curriculum incorporates a variety of text genres, including decodable text, narrative texts, informational text, and poetry. |
| | The curriculum draws linkages between oral language, reading, and writing. |
| | The documents support using direct and explicit instruction where appropriate (e.g., for letter-sound correspondences). |
| | The documents support using a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student (i.e., the "I Do, We Do, You Do" approach) where appropriate. More information on this model can be found here and here. |
| **Do the curriculum guidelines or syllabi provide information on the following key topics for math instruction?** | |
| | The documents provide learning objectives for numbers and operations, algebra, measurement, geometry and spatial reasoning, and statistics and data analysis. |
| | The learning objectives focus on conceptual understanding as well as procedural skills. |
| | The curriculum is "spiral" in that learning within a domain is spread out and concepts are revisited repeatedly over months and across grades. See the How-to Guide on Numeracy page 3. |
| | The documents support using high-impact instructional strategies such as mathematical models, explanation and justification, and connections between formal and informal mathematics. |
| **Do the curriculum guidelines or syllabi provide information on cross-sectional issues relevant to literacy and math instruction?** | |
| | The documents indicate important themes or topics to be addressed in the materials. |
| | The documents provide information on gender-inclusive materials. |
| | The documents provide information on UDL. |
| | The documents provide information on incorporating social-emotional learning into the subject content and instruction. |
| **Do the curriculum guidelines or syllabi provide information on literacy in a bilingual or multilingual setting?** | |
| | The documents recommend the use of a language of instruction that is familiar to the children. |
| | The documents include guidance and approaches on how to support children who are learning in an additional language. |
| | The documents take into account the curricular, pedagogical, and sequencing implications of bilingualism and biliteracy when students transition from instruction and reading in one language to another (if applicable). |

# PART 2: Scope and Sequence

The scope and sequence detail the content to be learned (scope) and the order in which it is to be learned (sequence). They are essential documents guiding the elaboration of teaching and learning materials. For optimal results, it is important that the target content and skills be carefully organized, building higher-order skills systematically on lower-order skills, as well as progress at a reasonable pace so as to not overwhelm students with too much too fast.

## Scope and Sequence Checklist

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| **Is there an existing scope and sequence?** | |
| | A scope and sequence is available for each grade, by term. |
| | The scope and sequence was developed by content experts in consultation with linguists and experts in the language of instruction. |
| | The scope and sequence has been recently reviewed and updated if necessary to align with current best practices. |
| **Is the scope and sequence in line with the syllabus and school context?** | |
| | The scope and sequence is aligned with the curriculum or syllabus. |
| | The scope and sequence is aligned with the productive number of school weeks. |
| | The scope and sequence is aligned with the number of hours allocated to the subject in a school week. |
| | For multilingual contexts, the scope and sequence is tailored to the specific language for which materials need to be developed. |
| **Does the scope and sequence include all essential literacy and mathematics content?** | |
| | The scope and sequence includes print knowledge, the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, alphabetics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension), and writing (handwriting, spelling, composition, etc.). |
| | The scope and sequence includes numbers and operations, algebra, measurement, geometry and spatial reasoning, and statistics and data analysis. |
| **Does the scope and sequence establish parameters to ensure consistency and appropriate increases of difficulty?** | |
| | The scope and sequence uses a teaching order for letters (graphemes) that is based at least in part on productivity. |
| | The scope and sequence defines the number and selection of the letters (graphemes) to be learned each week. |
| | The scope and sequence indicates the number and selection of decodable words, sight words, and vocabulary by week. |
| | The scope and sequence indicates the difficulty of texts for different units/terms (e.g., information about the word length, sentence length, and percentage of vocabulary that needs to be repeated). |
| | The scope and sequence indicates genre or text type for each unit. |
| | The scope and sequence indicates parameters for text length, and the texts progressively get longer and more complex in language structure. |

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| | The scope and sequence has learning objectives and content for all language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). |
| | The scope and sequence identifies desired instructional activities or routines to be further refined by writers. |
| | The scope and sequence promotes gender inclusiveness in texts, illustrations, and instructional activities. |
| | The scope and sequence incorporates UDL principles. |
| | The scope and sequence includes review lessons (e.g., every fifth, sixth, or seventh lesson reviews the content of the previous lessons). |