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Assessing the Essentials Curriculum

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1. What is assessed in the *Essentials* Curriculum?

The *Essentials* curriculum divides each subject into 3 sections:

- Essential opportunities
- Essential Learning Objectives
- Milestones for progress



Essential Opportunities (Breadth of Study) are not assessed. This is because this section does not include any qualitative statements to describe a pupil's accomplishment. Leaders may wish to monitor this area of the curriculum but that is a different matter from assessment.

Essential Learning Objectives are the assessment foci in the *Essentials* curriculum. We have used the Purpose and Aims of Study to create the learning objectives. In the *Essentials* Curriculum, learning objectives are not 'achieved'. They are advanced: systematically and gradually from Year 1 through to Year 6.

The **milestones** provide assessment criteria for each learning objective. They describe progression as follows:

- **Milestone 1** - the expected attainment by the end of Year 2
- **Milestone 2** - the expected attainment by the end of Year 4
- **Milestone 3** - the expected attainment by the end of Year 6.

2. How is depth of learning assessed?

In each milestone, pupils may demonstrate three levels of understanding of the content: Basic, Advancing and Deep learning.

These three levels of understanding represent cognitive domains. The diagram below shows progression through these cognitive domains within each milestone.



3. What is the Depth of Learning Index?

The table below provides a description of the three cognitive domains of Basic, Advancing and Deep learning.

Depth of Learning	Cognitive challenge	Nature of progress	Typically, pupils will	Predominant teaching style
Basic	Low level cognitive demand. Involves following instructions.	Acquiring	name, describe, follow instructions or methods, complete tasks, recall information, ask basic questions, use, match, report, measure, list, illustrate, label, recognise, tell, repeat, arrange, define, memorise.	Modelling Explaining
Advancing	Higher level of cognitive demand. Involves mental processing beyond recall. Requires some degree of decision making.	Practising	apply skills to solve problems, explain methods, classify, infer, categorise, identify patterns, organise, modify, predict, interpret, summarise, make observations, estimate, compare.	Reminding Guiding
Deep	Cognitive demands are complex and abstract. Involves problems with multi-steps or more than one possible answer. Requires justification of answers.	Deepening Understanding	solve non-routine problems, appraise, explain concepts, hypothesise, investigate, cite evidence, design, create, prove.	Coaching Mentoring

Each of the cognitive domains Basic, Advancing and Deep are split into 2 which gives a quantification of a pupil's depth of learning.

This is called the Depth of Learning (DOL) Index.

Essential Opportunities																		
Learning Objectives																		
Milestone 1 The standard to reach by the end of Year 2						Milestone 2 The standard to reach by the end of Year 4						Milestone 3 The standard to reach by the end of Year 6						
B Basic		A Advancing		D Deep		B Basic		A Advancing		D Deep		B Basic		A Advancing		D Deep		
Current DOL index	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cumulative DOL index	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18

The table below shows how the depth of learning index represents a pupil's cognitive domain.

Depth of Learning	DOL index	Meaning
Basic	1	Some evidence of some of the indicators
	2	Widespread evidence of some of the indicators
Advancing	3	Some evidence of most of the indicators
	4	Widespread evidence of most of the indicators
Deep	5	Some evidence of all of the indicators
	6	Widespread evidence of all of the indicators

Two depth of learning indices are used in the system.

- 1) The current Depth of Learning Index
- 2) The cumulative Depth of Learning Index

The current DOL index shows a pupil's current level of understanding of the milestone content. The cumulative DOL index shows a pupil's current depth of learning along with his or her previous depth of learning from earlier milestones.

For more information on how the Depth of Learning (DOL) index is used in the system, please refer to the attainment and progress section.