

## Review of the subject curriculum ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

<b>1. Are the learning outcomes and educational content appropriate for the developmental age of students?</b>			
1 – inappropriate	2 – appropriate to a certain extent	3 – mostly appropriate	4 – completely appropriate
Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.			

<b>2. Are the learning outcomes and educational content appropriate for the number of lessons?</b>			
1 – inappropriate	2 – appropriate to a certain extent	3 – mostly appropriate	4 – completely appropriate
Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.			

<b>3. Are the learning outcomes and educational content relevant and based on scientific knowledge of the subject area?</b>			
1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 - mostly	4 – completely
<p>Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.</p> <p>I have chosen ‘mostly’ just to be able to comment that the judgements on outcomes are very heavily structured by the <b>amount of support</b> that each student needs in order to achieve an outcome.</p> <p>Different levels of attainment are also expressed in the assessment scale but to a much lesser extent and the range of attainment described is not very wide. While the philosophy behind this approach seems entirely benign, I wonder if more consideration of differential attainment might be appropriate. The label for the lowest attainment, translated into English as ‘satisfactory’ seems to presuppose that all students will achieve well, given sufficient support. Again, the philosophy behind this is to be applauded but I wonder if a label such as that once used in the UK – <b>‘Working towards ...’</b> might more accurately reflect student performances which are still on their way to being at a desirable or desired level. The other labels might be calibrated to match if this suggestion is thought worth trying.</p>			

<b>4. Are the domains that are necessary for the subject area well represented?</b>			
1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 - mostly	4 – completely

Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.

**5. Does the curriculum contain an adequate ratio of the breadth and depth of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the subject area?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 - mostly	4 – completely
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Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.

**6. Does the curriculum, especially as regards the proposals in chapters F and G (Learning and teaching, Assessment), enable the acquisition of the listed learning outcomes?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 – mostly	4 – completely
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Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.

I have selected 'mostly' in order to be able to remark that for less experienced teachers the next step of interpreting the guidelines may be challenging.

The success of this curriculum will depend on how well it is integrated with the systems in Croatia for Continuous Professional Development and in-service teacher orientation.

**7. Are the proposed learning outcomes and other elements of the curriculum in line with the European and global recommendations?**

1 – no	2 – to a certain extent	3 - mostly	4 – completely
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Please explain what should be modified if Your answer is 1, 2 or 3.

**8. Are the learning outcomes and educational content comparable with those in Your country?**

They are much more explicit, numerous and nuanced than outcome objectives for Modern Foreign Languages in the UK, at Secondary level and especially at Primary level.

I found the detail and age-appropriate progression of the domains of Communicative Competence, Intercultural Understanding and Autonomy most impressive and likely to be very useful.

I also liked the element of developing Discourse complexity that had been built in.

The levels of cognitive and personal maturity that the pupils are expected to express through the foreign language also seems far beyond what it is aimed at in UK MFL teaching.

#### 9. Please suggest other modifications if You consider them necessary.

1. As mentioned on my annotations to the syllabus itself, I recognise that the assessment labels and other terms are translations into English from Croatian and that the essential thing is what their core meaning in Croatian is. However, I felt a little uneasy that the label for the lowest attainment was given as **'satisfactory'**.

Although this term has in recent years been used by UK Ofsted (referring to overall school performance) to mean 'not really good enough', it should be recalled that its core meaning in everyday use is 'adequate', 'what is needed' and thus it is not appropriate for a description of a pupil's performance or attainment that one would wish to improve on. The euphemism **'Working towards'** is useful to express the latter idea.

2. It is good not to have to contend with 'bureaucratic' lists of required words and structures at each level but there are some areas (possibly especially relevant for English) where perhaps teachers and materials writers would appreciate more detailed guidance. Some examples are given below:

- I have annotated the syllabus document to query what exactly is meant by 'simple' letters (for writing) and less challenging sounds in English (for listening and speaking). Some indication could be helpful (possibly on another document) of which these might be so that choices about ordering and sequencing of focus on letters and sounds.
- I was also uneasy about learning outcomes which involved pronouncing the sound for a particular letter. While this may work for some of the other languages following the structure of this curriculum, English is notoriously a very 'deep' orthography with multiple and not always transparent correspondences between letters and phonemes and it may be misleading as well as ultimately ineffective to promote a 'one-for-one' view of letter and sound links.

A separate document categorising such correspondences and suggesting a sequence for focusing on them would be useful. I am not suggesting a full-blown Phonics syllabus but English is a special case orthographically and some hints from a Phonics scheme regarding the sequence in which to focus on English letters and sounds might be useful.

3. I do not know about the national examinations system in Croatia but it seemed to me that while the present document provides good guidance for in-school assessment there is no indication of how the components of national examinations which might occur at different points relate to the curriculum content.

For fairness to all pupils and schools across the system, this is an area in which explicit lists of expectations in terms of 'core' topic areas, text-types, and even core vocabulary and grammatical structures would be needed. It could be that there are already such documents

linked to this curriculum, in which case my remarks are irrelevant, but it is a consideration I wished to highlight.

#### **10. Your conclusion about the proposed curriculum.**

The approach to the education and young people which lies behind this curriculum seems liberal and informed by the notion that all can achieve given appropriate support. It is refreshing to see the categories of Intercultural Competence and Learning to Learn (Autonomy) given full expression in the documentation, and the explicit encouragement that there is for cross-curricular links. Experienced teachers and materials-creators should welcome the balance of guidance and freedom of interpretation the curriculum provides.

My concern is for interpretation at the 'next level down' that is, at the level of making specific choices for course and lesson content, and of informing choices about the purchase or not of available published materials. This may be the function of senior leadership at school-and-clusters-of-schools levels and of in-service training, in which case my remarks are again irrelevant but as an outsider to the Croatian system it is a question I felt I should ask.

I also mentioned above the need for transparent advice about how the curriculum links to the specifications for more formal testing and examinations (if there are any)/