Below is a list of the characteristics of the English National Curriculum identified in the government documents. It complements the descriptions of subject matter and knowledge components of the curriculum, and it addresses general features of curriculum building. The characteristics may be adapted to serve as a resource for handouts or PowerPoint presentations of discussion points. For a more in-depth discussion of the National Curriculum, please refer to the index of A Guide to Teaching Practice.

Characteristics of the National Curriculum

Breadth

Of elements of learning, aims, contents, pedagogy, assessment.
Coverage across and within areas of the curriculum.
Not to sacrifice breadth to depth.
How does breadth sit with ‘differentiation’?

Balance

Balance within and across areas of the curriculum.
Appropriate attention to each area of the curriculum/element of learning.
Needs allocation of sufficient time and resources.
Balance over time.
Balance of aims, contents, pedagogy, assessment.
Balance is not the same as equal shares – a balanced diet.

Relevance

Relevant to what/whom?
Present and future needs.
Applications outside and beyond school.

Differentiation

Of elements of learning, aims, contents, pedagogy, assessment to individual needs.
Matching: the Lancaster study.
Task analysis (see Lancaster study).
Need to identify needs.
Differentiation by aims, content, pedagogy, quantity, quality, speed.
Differentiation by input, process and outcome.
Differentiation of teachers’ attention, type of language, motivation.
Differentiation sits uncomfortably with balance and breadth.

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**Progression**

Of aims, content, pedagogy, assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitatively and qualitatively</th>
<th>Development of inquiring attitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple to complex</td>
<td>Growing attention and concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex to simple</td>
<td>Range of purposes and applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low order to high order</td>
<td>Breadth and depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific to general</td>
<td>Increasing confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General to specific</td>
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<td>Concrete to abstract</td>
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<td>Abstract to concrete</td>
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<td>Familiar to unfamiliar</td>
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<td>Near to distant</td>
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</table>

**Continuity**

Across transition points.
Within and across curriculum.
Of elements of aims, content, learning, pedagogy, assessment.
Planned continuity and discontinuity.

**Coherence**

Within and across the curriculum.
Coherence of aims, content, pedagogy, assessment.