



What's in the CAPS Package?
A Comparative study of the National Curriculum
Statement (NCS) and the Curriculum and
Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): FET
Phase

Economics

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Research question for the NCS / CAPS FET comparison

- Economics - in the BCM subject grouping in the FET Phase.
- Critical question

What does the comparison between the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for FET Phase (Grades 10 to 12) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) reveal about:

- the extent to which the NCS curricula were re-packaged or rewritten in the formulation of the CAPS;
- the relative depth and breadth of the content covered in the respective curricula,
- the overall design, structure and coherence of the curricula,
- the level of specification of various aspects of the curricula, and
- the guidance provided by the curricula for the teaching and assessment of the subject.

Referenced documents

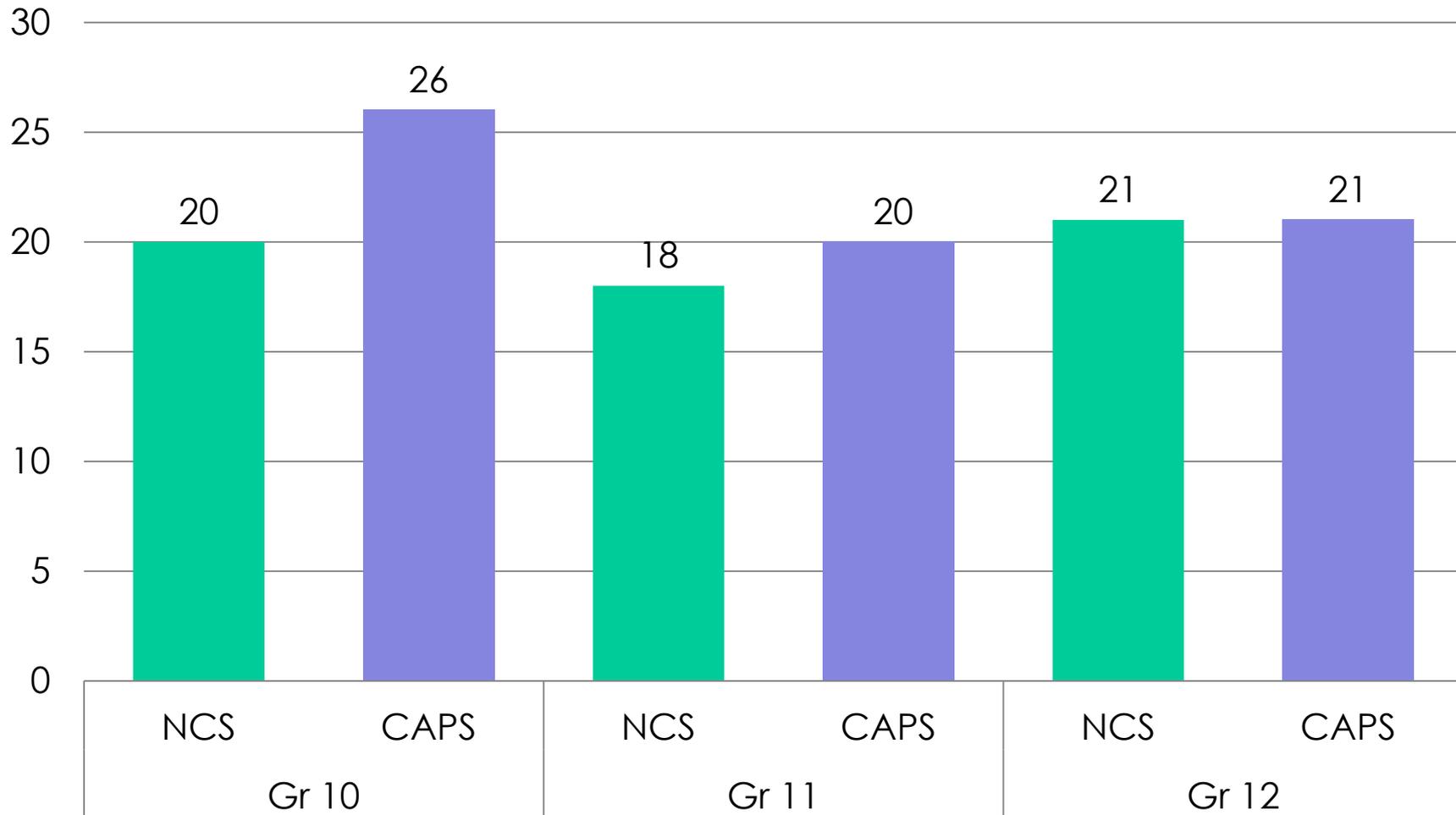
1 National Curriculum Statement	
Department of Education. 2003. National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12- Economics.	Doc 1.1
Department of Education. 2008. National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12. Learning Programme Guidelines - Economics.	Doc 1.2
Department of Education. 2008. National Curriculum Statement for Grades 10-12 (General): Subject Assessment Guidelines - Economics.	Doc 1.3
Examination Guidelines (January 2009)	Doc 1.4
National Qualifications Framework (2005)	Doc 1.5
National Protocol on Assessment (October 2005)	Doc 1.6
2 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement	
Department of Basic Education. 2011. National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Further Education and Training Phase Grades 10-12 - Economics	Doc 2.1
Department of Basic Education. (n.d.) National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement. Gr R – 12	Doc 2.2
Department of Basic Education. (n.d) National Protocol for Assessment. Gr R – 12.	Doc 2.3

Some observations

- Significant shift in **CAPS**- streamlining of user documents into a single main subject-specific document.
- Central design principle is syllabus type (content based)
- Distinct feature of the CAPS - absence of the term “outcomes” OR of any alternative (objective etc.).
- CAPS- more user-friendly but some inconsistencies and errors
- Clear prescriptions - structured Annual Teaching Plan - convenient but may prove problematic in practice .

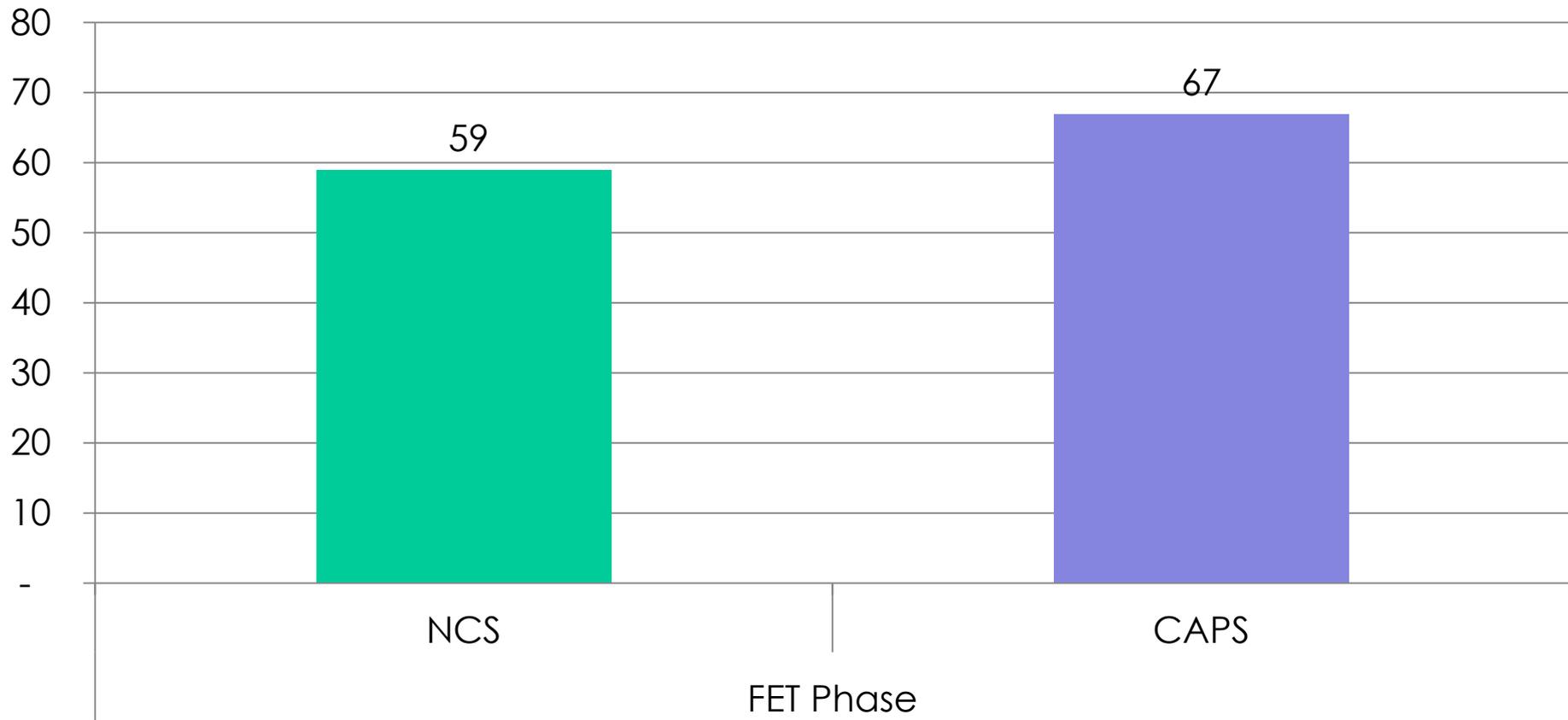
Coverage (Breadth)

Graph 1: Total Number of Topics per Grade



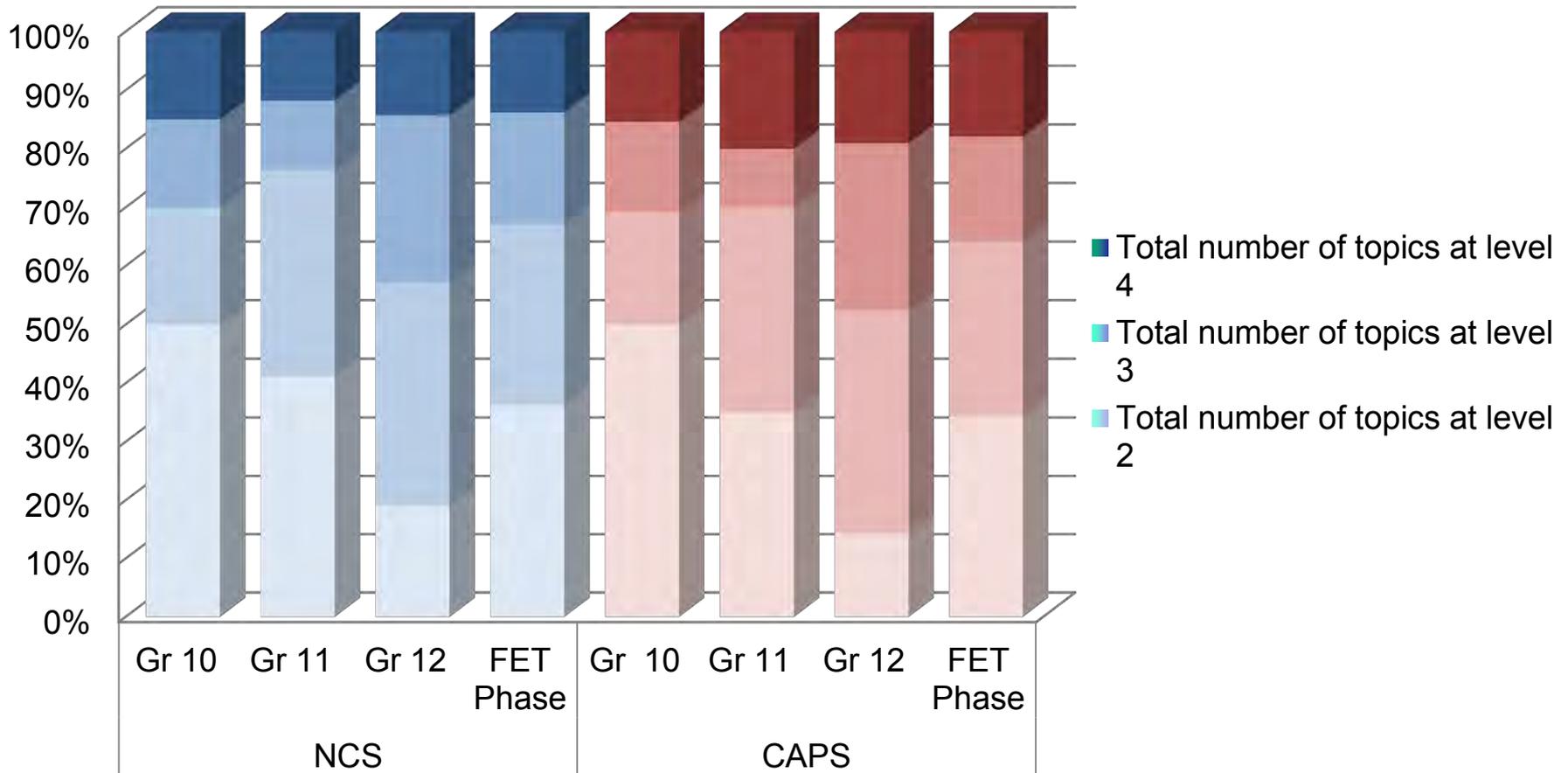
Topics per phase

Graph 2: Total Number of Topics per Phase



Depth

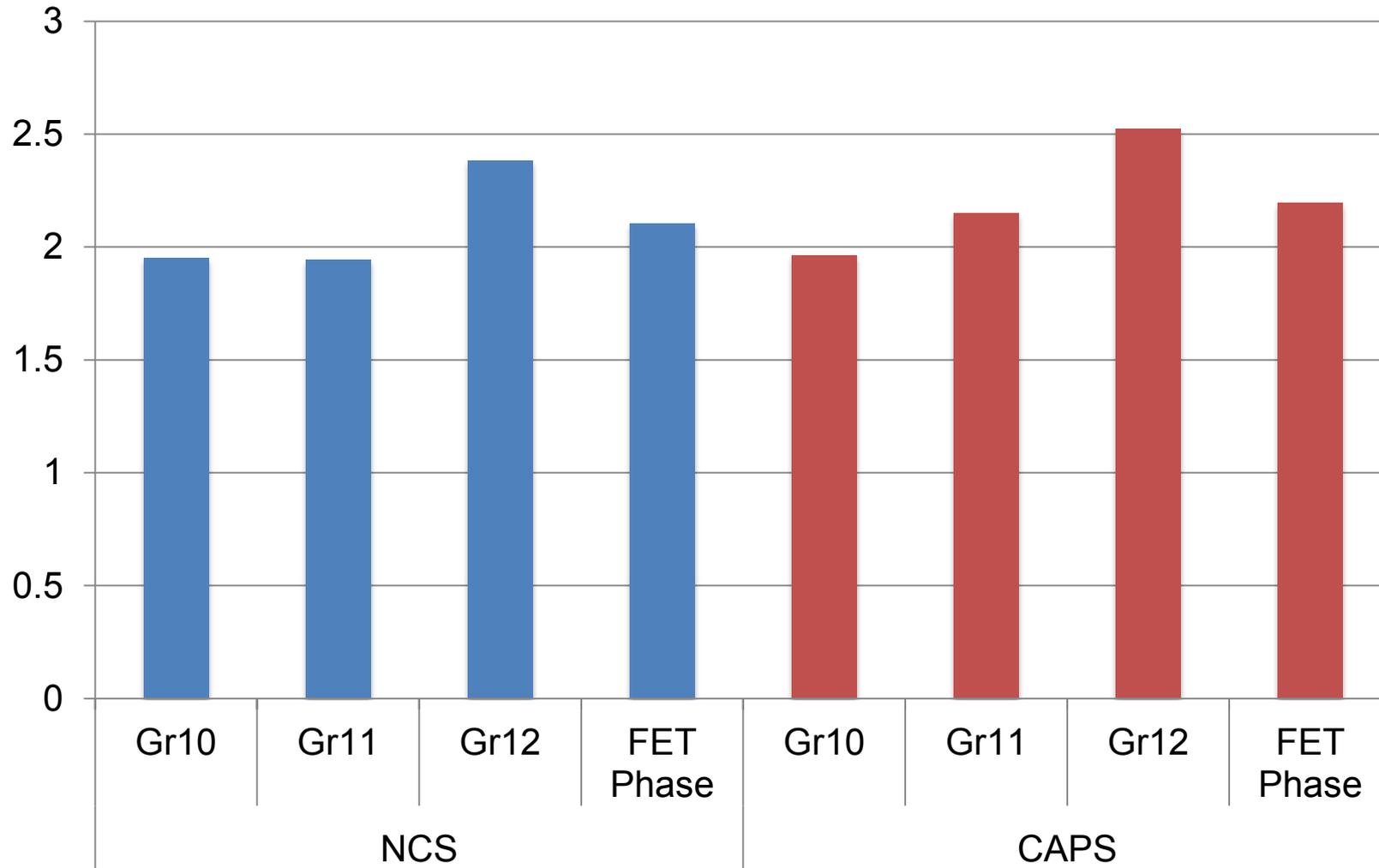
Graph 3: Depth of Topics per Grade and Phase



Comments on content depth

- The **CAPS** curriculum curriculum content distribution L1:L2:L3:L4 is 34%:30%:18%:18
- Approx one fifth (18%) of the curriculum content is deemed conceptually challenging
- Approx two-thirds (64%) is pitched at the two lowest levels – assessment implications.
- Similar distribution across levels 1 to 3 for both curricula. A fairly significant shift in level 4, - 4% increase
- Shift affords examiners greater scope for the inclusion of assessments that are cognitively demanding as 4% more content is pitched at a high level 4.

Graph 4: Total depth score



Depth score

- The overall depth score of the CAPs has increased in both Grades 11 and 12
- Has resulted in an increase in the FET phase depth score in the CAPs.
- A positive move that signals an improving standard in the CAPS.
- The overall shift however is marginal and is not likely to have substantive effects on teaching or student performance.

Content specification

- CAPS is more detailed in terms of outlining the content
- but , the omission of appropriate ‘command verbs’ indicating the level of scope and depth of the content -challenge

Pacing

- The **CAPS** - high degree of specification with regard to pacing. Broad topics disaggregated into sub-topics per week.
- Timing and placement of specific content segments as well as assessment tasks are prescribed - a level of rigidity - Annual Teaching Plans - not presented as proposed or suggested programmes of work.
- Extended breadth - has implications

Sequencing

- **CAPS** - level of specification of sequencing of content is high.
- Introduces a level of rigidity and limits the freedom of the teacher to select certain topics ahead of other topics in the prescribed sequence.
- Progression across grades in order **CAPS**

Pedagogy

- The **CAPS** - relative silence on pedagogy
- This may well be regarded as a strength as it allows teachers to develop context-specific roles
- The challenge though may rise in contexts where teachers of Economics may not have the necessary repertoire of pedagogic content knowledge to teach Economics.

Assessment

- Higher degree of guidance offered by the CAPS curriculum than the NCS curriculum
- For Grade 10 and 11- all assessment is internal
- Comprises of a total of 7 tasks, 6 of which must be completed during the school year (25%) and the final task, an examination, makes up 75% of the total assessment.
- The Annual Teaching Plans specify the formal assessments per term for each grade
- Grade 12, the ratio of internal to external assessment is 25:75. The 25% internal assessment comprises of 7 specified tasks. Both internal and external assessments are subject to moderation.

Integration

- Low specification of integration of economics with other subjects - implicit
- Low specification of integration of economics with everyday knowledge - implicit

Implications for South African context

- Extended breadth and pacing expectations
- Intended curriculum for Economics suggests the employment of learner support materials -affluent schools able to offer learners a fuller and richer experience
- Prescriptive assessment protocol- what and when- create challenges for application in varying contexts - likely to stifle teacher creativity - alternative methods of assessment.
- Over-specification - structure of the Grade 12 external examination – question types and marks – shape teaching
- No explicit integration possibilities with other disciplines and with everyday knowledge – may be taught in a narrow, insular, theoretical way.

Assumptions regarding teacher expertise

- assumes the presence of a suitably qualified, resourceful teacher with a post-matric qualification in Economics.
- assumes the presence of a teacher who has discipline-specific pedagogic knowledge.

Recommendations

- Reduction in the breadth of the curriculum – increase depth
- Increase the amount of high level content as the current distribution reflects a skewed loading in favour of low level content.
- Rearrange the sequencing of topics in the Grade 11 curriculum
- Reduce the level of specification with regard to Assessment, in particular, the specification at Grade 12 (examination).

Continued...

- Reduce the number of formal assessment tasks.
- Refine topic listing to include command verbs that signal the scope and depth of proposed content in the curriculum document.
- Include detailed subject-specific pedagogies that are appropriate for the teaching of Economics
- Several errors were identified in the curriculum document (see Section 8.4 for details). These need to be corrected.
- Develop a support document that demonstrates specific integration possibilities

Recommendation re content and skills gaps identified

- The team is of the view that the following key content areas need strengthening in the CAPS:
 - Firstly, the content topic ‘Broad social Goals of Economics’ - although some of these issues are integrated into various topics across the phase, they remain implicit.
 - Secondly, ‘the predictable response of people to incentives’ a key issue that underlines neoclassical economic theory (on which the CAPS is based) is not sufficiently emphasised.

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- Thirdly, the assumption that ‘voluntary exchange occurs only when participating parties expect to gain’ is embedded in content topics but is not sufficiently explicit as a key economic principle.
- Fourthly, the team felt that the topic ‘Interest rates’ is a crucial topic in Economics and as such required greater depth.
- Fifthly, there does not appear to be sufficient emphasis in the CAPS on the critique of government policies.

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- That the very specific skills associated with particular content are signalled explicitly
- That a higher proportion of the content be allocated to content that is of high cognitive demand (20-25%).

Concluding comment

The team's overall impression is that the CAPS FET Economics curriculum covers to a fair extent the content and skills that a typical Grade 12 learner should exit the phase with. There are however areas where the curriculum can be strengthened