

SENIOR PHASE CURRICULUM REVIEW: DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

1. Following the debate on subject choice in May, the Deputy First Minister announced that he would commission an independent review of the Senior Phase curriculum. This received the backing of the Parliament.
2. The purpose of the review is to help us to better understand how the Senior Phase curriculum is being implemented in schools (both the learning and teaching, as well as the curriculum design) and identify areas we might seek to modify to ensure the best standard of education for our young people.
3. The Scottish Government is committed to working with local and national partners to agree the terms of reference for this through the Curriculum and Assessment Board.

Scope

4. The independent review will draw on evidence from education stakeholders and partners, including the latest data on young people's progress through Curriculum for Excellence and the outcomes they achieve when they leave school.
5. It will focus on curriculum design and the range of pathways and different types of qualifications and awards available to young people. Whilst the review is of the Senior Phase, it should also consider the extent to which the Broad General Education is preparing young people for the Senior Phase.
6. Initial discussions with key partners in the education sector, as well as evidence emerging from the Committee Inquiry, suggest the following themes should be considered during the review:
 - **Culture**
 - Level of understanding of the purpose of the senior phase (amongst young people, parents, practitioners, leaders, employers and other partners).
 - Extent to which the aspirations, aims and purposes of Curriculum for Excellence are being achieved through the senior phase.
 - Pace of change and approaches to implementation
 - **Capacity**
 - The senior phase curriculum offer across S4-6 (the question of "subject choice" as well as the wider offer) and the opportunity for young people to blend a range of achievements, awards and qualifications.
 - The equity of the curriculum offer across Scotland in terms of geography and socio-economic factors
 - National and local support and guidance for implementation of the senior phase.

- **Structure**

- Impact of curriculum design decisions at local authority and school level and the rationale behind these.
- Range and breadth of different pathways available, and the scope to meet the individual aspirations of young people.
- Partnerships between schools and colleges to offer a range of pathways and choices to young people, including, for example, foundation apprenticeships.
- Coherence and continuity of learning between the broad general education and the Senior Phase.
- Impact of approaches to learning and teaching (including bi-level and multi-level teaching, digital learning and collaborative approaches to delivery).
- Impact on specific subjects (in particular Gaelic, Modern Languages and STEM).

7. The credibility of National 4 and teacher numbers have also been highlighted within the context of Senior Phase implementation, however, we would suggest that these do not fall within the scope of this review and the basis that these issues are already being considered through pre-existing programmes of work.

Guiding Principles

8. Regardless of the issues to be explored, we suggest that there should be some key principles guiding this work from the outset, that we would want all involved to sign up to. In particular:

- The experience of young people should be the most important consideration throughout the review.
- The review will have a clear focus on the experience of young people and the breadth, depth and type of learning opportunities they have had in their Senior Phase, including transition from the Broad General Education.
- The emphasis will be on curriculum design and approaches to learning and teaching, rather than the content of qualifications.
- The principles and aspirations of CfE are not being questioned – we have had clear feedback that we have the right policy foundations in place – but about understanding how this policy is being implemented and the impact this is having on outcomes for learners.
- It will be about understanding what is happening in practice, identifying what is working well, learning lessons from what is not working and developing advice for further improvement should that be necessary.
- It will be a collaborative approach, involving partners and practitioners from the outset, in learning together.

Approach

OECD

9. We have asked the OECD to lead the review, building on the successful and well received review of Curriculum for Excellence led by the OECD in 2015. An

OECD dimension offers us an independent and collaborative way of approaching this work.

10. As part of its [Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education](#) activity, the OECD is providing tailored support to individual countries and education systems to analyse and support the development and implementation of education policies. Within this framework, the OECD has developed an outline proposal to provide tailored support to Scotland to inform the review of Senior Phase from an implementation perspective.

11. The main focus of this work will be on approaches to implementation of the Senior Phase in terms of the curriculum, learning and teaching and how it is aligned coherently to the overall education strategy in Scotland. The Policy Assessment will take stock of the implementation of Senior Phase in Scotland, provide feedback on progress to date and offer advice to inform next steps.

12. The methodology proposed includes an OECD policy assessment to be developed following consultations with key stakeholders during a country visit, and a stakeholder engagement seminar to jointly develop the conclusions and recommendations on ways forward, engaging national, regional and local partners.

13. This would be a smaller scale exercise than was previously undertaken in 2015, over a shorter timescale. It would run from December 2019 to conclude with a report in summer 2020 and involve a one week assessment visit early in 2020, with further stakeholder engagement work in the Spring on the initial findings.

Scottish Practitioner Forum

14. The Deputy First Minister is been clear that current educational practitioners need to play a key role in the review process. The Scottish Government will therefore convene a practitioner forum which will work alongside the OECD team to: provide advice to the OECD on current practice in Scotland; help shape the approach to the review; facilitate stakeholder engagement across the country; and support the development of the OECD report.

15. The forum will be led by an experienced director of education nominated by the Association of Directors of Education (ADES). Initial discussions with ADES have led to the nomination of Tony McDaid, Executive Director of Education Resources, South Lanarkshire Council.

16. We are in the process of identifying wider membership of this group and will take advice from CAB on this.

National partners support for the review

17. Education Scotland have a clear role in supporting this review and have identified a number of options for how the inspection process can support the review, enabling us to capture a breadth of experiences across Scotland

18. Whilst the focus of the review is not around the National Qualifications, SQA will also clearly be able to offer its own observations on the system, albeit from the perspective of the data and intelligence it gathers around the NQs.

19. We will need to ensure that any activity augments, rather than duplicates, activities planned by the OECD. As such, these and other key national bodies will be asked to provide a designated point of support to lead this work, to represent their organisations on the Practitioner Forum and to work with the Scottish Government and the OECD to shape all relevant activity into a coherent package of work.

Timeline

20. The following table sets out a broad outline of activity between December 2019 and August 2020

November – December 2019	Agreeing Terms of Reference for the review with national partners and OECD Identifying membership of the Scottish Practitioner Forum Providing of existing evidence to the OECD Holding first meeting of the practitioner forum
January – February 2020	OECD evidence gathering sessions – facilitated by Scottish Practitioner Forum
March - April 2020	Drafting work by OECD and Scottish Practitioner Forum
May – June 2020	OECD Engagement sessions – to share and develop draft report
July-August 2020	Report finalised

Wider programme of work to support the review

21. There are a number of other strands of work that will contribute towards the review, some existing and some that could be commissioned:

Activity	Purpose	Timing
Existing		
Publication of Headteacher Research	To provide the views and experiences of headteachers in implementing the Senior Phase curriculum	Sept 2019
Young People in Scotland Survey	Questions included in this survey on young peoples' experiences of the senior phase, including: reasons why they choose the subjects they do in the Senior Phase; guidance provided to support subject choice and their views on the value of this; and how	December 2019

	much of a say they have on how the curriculum is designed	
DYW Evaluation	To look at successful implementation of DYW Programme	Started but not intended to publish until after programme completes in 2021
Stirling University Nuffield funded research project	'Choice, attainment and positive destinations: exploring the impact of curriculum policy change on young people'. This is a 2 year project (Oct 2019-2021) to comprehensively map and analyse curriculum provision in Scottish secondary schools, with a focus on curriculum narrowing, and its effects on the choices and transitions of young people.	2019-2021 (so beyond the timescale of the review)
To be commissioned		
Review of existing evidence by National Bodies (SG/ ES/ SQA/ SDS)	To bring together existing evidence on implementation of the senior phase including: committee inquiry; ES inspection and engagement evidence; SQA data; and SDS & SFC data.	Nov-Dec 2019
Research Strategy for Scottish Education: Phase 2 of Senior Phase Research	Following the publication of the Headteacher Survey, it is intended to undertake follow up qualitative research exploring in further detail experiences of Senior Phase from the perspectives of teachers, young people and parents. This research is still to be scoped and would need to complement and add value to the Review / OECD activities.	2020

Questions to be considered in the initial scoping of the review

22. At this stage, in scoping the review, we need to consider:

- Are these the right themes to explore? Will they provide the depth of understanding we need to make any necessary improvement? Is there anything missing?

- Is this the best approach? Who are the key groups we need to reach? How can we secure their involvement?
- Are the different roles (OECD/practitioner forum/ CAB) in the review sufficiently clear?