

Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

**Analysis of Consultation Responses
Final Report May 2023**

June 2023

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Abbreviations

ASN	Additional Support Needs
CCG	Collaborative Community Group
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
CLPL	Career-long professional learning
CPD	Continuous professional development
DoE	The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
FE	Further education
GME	Gaelic medium education
HE	Higher education
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDL	Interdisciplinary learning
IRG	Independent Review Group
ITE	Initial teacher education
LIC	Learning in Context
PP	Personal Pathway
PSE	Personal and Social Education
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDA	Scottish Diploma of Achievement
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority

Summary

The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment was announced in October 2021. The aim of the Review is to ensure that all Senior Phase learners in Scotland (predominantly those aged 15-18) have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the width, depth, and relevance of their learning. The Review has been led by Professor Louise Hayward, supported by an Independent Review Group which includes teachers, learners, parents/carers, users of qualifications, academics, and policy makers. The Review has been undertaken over three phases: Phase One was designed to develop the underpinning vision and principles, while Phase Two consulted on a set of options for change. This report presents findings for Phase Three. This sought views on a high-level overarching model for qualifications and assessment via discussions with Collaborative Community Groups (CCGs) and allied discussion groups, led by members of the Independent Review Group, and an online survey to schools and colleges. The draft model can be found on page 13.

The Review questionnaire covered views on a draft high-level model, each of the three elements (Subject Studies, Learning in Context and the Personal Pathway), the Diploma, the changes in practice needed to deliver the new system and naming of the qualifications, as well as providing opportunities to comment on the Review process.

The Phase Three engagement ran from 3 March until 31st April. This report covers responses received until 14 April (with later responses analysed separately). The responses analysed in this report comprise: 311 School and College survey responses; 34 non-survey responses submitted directly to Scottish Government; and 19 CCG and allied discussion group meeting reports, representing over 400 people.

The feedback received through this engagement is being used to further develop the model ahead of a final report and recommendations being submitted to the Cabinet Secretary at the end of May 2023.

The proposed model

CCG groups and those responding via the School and College survey agreed with the proposal that the new model would both continue to offer learners opportunities to demonstrate achievement in subjects and have greater opportunities to demonstrate wider achievements. However, most of the respondents via the School and College survey raised concerns about the model. The CCG groups also considered that implementation would not be challenging. The main issues raised are discussed below under each of the elements.

Subject Studies

Views on the proposals for the Subject Studies element were mixed. The CCG groups largely agreed with the model's proposals but acknowledged that success would depend on a significant cultural shift among key stakeholder groups.

Opinions from those responding via the School and College survey were much more varied, with some supportive of the proposals, while most had reservations including some who favoured retention of annual exams.

Respondents considered the positive aspects of the proposals were the move towards fewer exams, which they felt would reduce stress and improve the learning environment; and the shift to a broader range of assessment approaches, especially where this puts the learner at the centre of their education.

Concerns were raised about the need to ensure alternative assessment approaches are as robust as the current external examination model; the staffing implications of managing and marking these approaches; qualifications for learners who leave before the end of the Senior Phase; options for learners wanting to take 'crash' courses in S5/S6; communication to key audiences, such as employers and academic institutions; and addressing inequalities between schools/learners.

Learning in Context

Views on the Learning in Context proposal were also mixed: generally, the CCG groups were positive, with learners especially enthusiastic; opinions from the School and College survey respondents were mixed, with some very positive, some expressing qualified support and many fairly negative.

Respondents considered the key positive aspects of this element were that it would motivate learners; and provide opportunities to deepen knowledge and develop understanding, skills and experiential learning on a much wider range of topics. Some qualified their support by commenting that while the Learning in Context proposal is a really good idea it will take a great deal of planning, preparation and resources to implement successfully.

The key concerns/issues mentioned by respondents were a need for clear guidance on development, phasing, scope and implementation and assessment; increased workloads to develop and deliver project work/interdisciplinary learning; concerns about the practicalities/constraints around timetabling interdisciplinary learning across the full curriculum; need for skills development/training; and equalities issues at the individual level for learners with additional support needs, especially those with literacy difficulties, and for settings in lower socio-economic areas. Concerns were also raised by respondents about validating/assessing the learners' work and, linked to this, how employers/universities would perceive this element.

Personal Pathway

Views on the Personal Pathway proposal were varied: the CCG groups welcomed this proposal, while on balance opinions from the School and College survey were more likely to highlight concerns.

Respondents considered the key positives of this element were that it offered opportunities for learners to evidence a wider range of achievements and had the potential to provide valuable opportunities for all learners. Learners and users of qualifications were especially likely to support this proposal.

However, a number of concerns were also raised from the survey and the CCG discussions. The key issues mentioned were that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, lower socio-economic areas and rural areas would have far fewer opportunities to achieve than others; concerns relating to consent, data ownership, data security; and concerns about the staff time, training and general resources that would be required to deliver the element effectively. Respondents also raised concerns about validating/assessing the learners' work; and how this element would be perceived by employers/universities. Some respondents argued that learners should have a right to privacy; while some argued that it was important they developed a healthy work/life balance; and were not required to document their extracurricular activities.

Scottish Diploma of Achievement

The CCGs and many of the respondents via the School and College survey welcomed the idea of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA) for all learners in Scotland. Many School and College survey respondents stated that they would need more information before commenting. Those welcoming the Diploma felt it would recognise a wider range of achievements than is the case under the current system, so will be accessible to more learners.

Suggestions to make the Diploma work in practice included early consultation/engagement with stakeholders so as to draw on their experience to fully develop the model; further clarity on exams and assessment issues; further clarity on the weighting between the three elements; measures to encourage stakeholder buy-in; and a detailed implementation plan. Respondents also raised issues around the need to introduce measures to address equity issues, workload issues, and resource constraints.

Qualifications and assessment system

Consultees were asked which changes to existing practice would they recommend to support the development of the new system. The main changes suggested were improving communications with stakeholders; adequately resourcing the new qualifications in terms of preparation time, teacher training, and budget; sharing

best practice to promote continuous improvement across the country; and reviewing the inspection process to align with the new model.

Parity of esteem

Respondents were asked if, in order to support parity of esteem, they thought all qualifications at a particular SCQF level should have the same name. Most – CCG groups and School and College survey respondents – thought qualifications at the same level should have the same name.

Those opposed felt that learners' achievements won't be recognised under the proposal; and that users of qualifications will not get the information they need from the proposed qualification. They suggested that further consultation, in particular with users of qualifications, would be required before any change takes place.

Additional comments about the approach

Consultees were asked if they had any further comments about the approach. Most took the opportunity to reiterate points made previously in their response. A small number of other comments raised included: more information will be required during the implementation phase if schools and colleges are to be kept on board; reassurance is needed that sufficient resources will be made available to fund the changes; and a need to ensure the model takes account of the increasing availability of artificial intelligence (AI). Some respondents commented that the transition will be very disruptive for schools/learners, with some asking for 'breathing space' for further review/rethink.

Introduction

Context for the Review

The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment was announced in October 2021. The aim of the Review is to ensure that all Senior Phase learners in Scotland (predominantly those aged 15-18) have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the width, depth, and relevance of their learning.

The Review was initiated in response to a number of factors including the experience gained and lessons learned as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic (such as the need for a more resilient assessment system); subsequent reports on Scottish education; the OECD report on Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence - Into the Future (2021)¹; and international comparisons which suggest that, without innovation and change, the Scottish education system risks lagging behind its economic competitors.

Structure of the Review

To provide a structure for engagement at key points in the process, the Review adopted a three phased approach:

- **Phase One** ran from August to September 2022, and focused on the development of an underpinning set of Vision and Principles. Engagement in the Review was supported by the Independent Review Group (IRG) who facilitated discussions with a series of Collaborative Community Groups (CCGs) and by materials sent to all secondary schools and colleges in Scotland to facilitate discussions and encourage participation.
- **Phase Two** ran from October 2022 to January 2023, and focused on detailed questions designed to lead to a preferred Qualifications and Assessment model. Again, the IRG and the CCGs participated, and supporting materials were sent to all schools and colleges. The options for change were also open to a twelve-week public consultation.
- The findings from Phase One and Phase Two, together with the body of research that underpinned the initiation of the Review, informed the development of a proposed future high-level model for qualifications and assessment.
- **Phase Three** commenced in March 2023 and sought views a high-level overarching model (see page 13 for a description of the model). Engagement was carried out through facilitated discussions with the CCGs and an online consultation survey sent to all schools and colleges in Scotland. This phase

1 OECD (2021), Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future, Implementing Education Policies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/bf624417-en>.

did not include a public consultation. The results of Phase Three were then used to further develop the model.

Consultation approach

Consultation on Phase Three was undertaken during the period 3 March until 31 April. **The information and analysis contained within this report covers responses received until 14 April only.** Responses received from 15 April to 31 April have been analysed separately.

CCG discussions: By 14 April, a total meeting reports from 19 CCGs and allied discussion groups, representing over 400 people were produced. This process involved a series of detailed in-depth discussions facilitated by an IRG member. CCG groups include groups of learners, parents/carers, teachers, headteachers, colleges, Directors of Education, academics, employers. Visits to a number of schools, to meet with learners and staff were also undertaken. A full list of CCG membership can be found [here](#).

School and College survey: Materials were also sent to all secondary schools and colleges in Scotland, and settings were asked to complete a consultation survey. A total of 311 valid² responses were received to the survey by 14 April: 259 were from school communities, 15 from colleges, 32 from others, and 5 unassigned. Most of the School and College survey responses were from teachers.

In many cases, schools and colleges held group discussions with multiple teachers/lecturers, parents and learners, with the responses submitted on behalf of the group. It is, therefore, not possible to determine exactly how many individuals were engaged in producing the School and College survey responses.

A further 34 non-survey responses were received by email by 14th April³, mainly from schools and colleges. Further details on the profile of respondents are provided in Appendix A.

The Review questionnaire sought views on the model, each of the three elements (Subject Studies, Learning in Context and the Personal Pathway), the Diploma, the changes in practice needed to deliver the new system and naming of the qualifications, as well as providing opportunities to comment on the Review process. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

It is worth noting that many of the Review respondents, principally those responding to the School and College survey and occasionally those taking part in CCG discussions, said that they felt they had insufficient information about the proposed

2 A further 20 responses were registered on Smart Survey but did not contain any information.

3 These were responses emailed directly to the Education Directorate.

model to comment (fully) and in some cases their responses were questions about the model/proposals.

Linked to this, the CCG discussions tended to be more positive and constructive in their approach, while the School and College survey responses were more likely to be negative and critical. There are many possible explanations for these differences.

- **The profile of the CCGs differed to the School and College survey:** most of the responses received via the School and College survey were received from school communities, rather than colleges, and the majority of these were from secondary school teachers. The CCG responses comprised a far broader range of stakeholders and whilst this included teacher groups it also included learners, parents and carers, universities, Directors of Education, employers, researchers and policy professionals. Appendix B includes a profile of the survey respondents.
- **The method of engagement was different:** a deliberative consultative process was adopted with the CCGs, which meant they had greater access to information about the Review via their IRG link member, opportunities to ask questions and time to reflect during and between each of the three phases. The School and College survey was not always accompanied by a group discussion and while it was suggested by the Review that educational settings discuss the proposals before responding, it was left up to each setting to determine if/how to do this. The act of discussing as a group prior to completion may have resulted in more nuanced responses, with those completing the online survey only, potentially feeling that they could be more direct.
- **Nearly all who participated in the CCG discussions participated in all three phases of the Review.** There were many more responses to the Phase Three School and College survey than the [Phase One survey](#), which indicates that some respondents to the Phase Three School and College survey did not participate in all three Phases.

Analysis

Progressive Partnership was commissioned to provide a robust, independent analysis of the responses to Phase Three. The information collected reflects the views of respondents but cannot be extrapolated to the wider population. The analysis and interpretation of Phase Three responses is therefore descriptive and qualitative.

Coding of open questions

Coding of the open question was done by Progressive's in-house team of experienced coding specialists. Prior to coding beginning, an analytical framework was developed for each open question in the consultation. The framework sets out

the range of key issues and themes for consideration. It is derived from the key themes within the Review and from a review of a cross-section of responses for each question.

All the responses were examined thoroughly and coded against the analytical framework. Small teams of experienced coders worked on each question, to minimise bias in the analysis. It is noted that, given the nature of the Review, several of the responses were complex/lengthy, and not amenable to coding. The coders therefore highlighted these responses, and they were reviewed separately by the executive team. All the CCG responses were analysed by the executive team.

Description

The report includes the full range of views presented by respondents, not just those mentioned by the majority. The report adopts the convention below in relation to reporting prevalence of the response. However, it is stressed this relates to responses received; and many of the responses were submitted on behalf of a group of people (sometimes a group of teachers or one or two classes, but in a small number of cases the submissions reflect large consultations covering hundreds of individuals).

- Many respondents: a prevalent theme.
- Several respondents: a recurring theme.
- Some respondents: another view.
- A few: a less commonly mentioned view.

Further, the report does not assign varying levels of weight to the responses received. Where relevant and practical, it identifies sub-group differences across the responses (in particular, it presents the CCG and the School and College survey responses separately), and it is mindful that the different sub-groups have different experiences, technical expertise and levels of engagement in the Review.

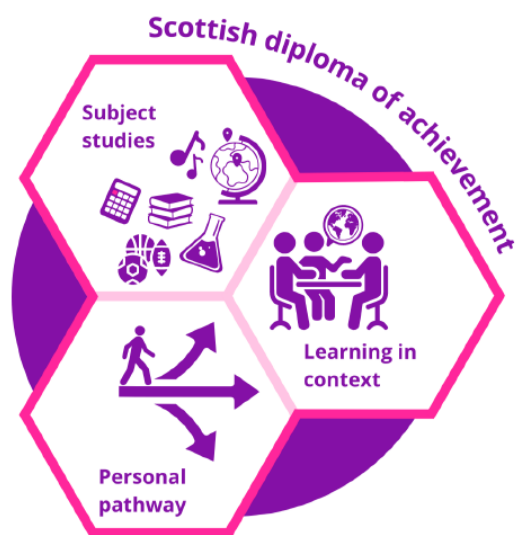
The Proposed Model

The model for change – March 2023

The model for change considered during Phase Three is illustrated by this figure. It was stressed that the various terms used to describe each part of the proposed new qualification are working titles rather than agreed terms.

Scottish Diploma of Achievement

(SDA): All learners would work towards a Diploma of Achievement. This allows evidence of learner achievements to be gathered across a broader range of areas than is currently the case. For the SDA to be awarded, the learner would have to demonstrate achievement in all three elements of the model illustrated (and described further below). It is anticipated that all senior stage learners would leave education settings with a profile of their achievements in each of the following three areas.



Subjects and Learning Programmes: These would be individual subjects, courses and learning pathways. They exist under the current system. It is proposed that in the new model, courses/programmes would be progressive over two years, and that additional ways of gathering evidence that are less susceptible to formulaic responses will be explored. While the study of individual subjects will remain a crucial part of education, in the new model other areas of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) would be recognised as being equally important.

Learning in Context / Interdisciplinary studies: The new model proposes the introduction of an interdisciplinary element to the qualification. This would be a project-based approach where evidence is gathered based on achievements across knowledge, skills and competencies in action. This could focus on a global challenge, e.g., climate change, migration or social justice; a local community task; or independent living skills. The Review notes that currently there are many different skills frameworks in play in Scotland and suggests that a single skills framework would be more helpful. While many schools and colleges are already involved in projects and programmes like this, it is recognised that the timeline for the introduction of this part of the qualification profile will require careful consideration and particular forms of support.

Personal Pathway: The third strand of the new model provides learners with opportunities to select aspects of their experiences that reflect their interests such as in drama, music, or sport; the contributions they make to society, such as taking a leadership role in a school or college activity; and their future aspirations including work experience and entrepreneurship. While this component would be subject to discussion with every learner, it is envisaged there would be common characteristics across all learners' Personal Pathways: including evidence of social, cultural and economic activity.

Other issues: As well as reflecting on the proposed model for change, the third phase considered the following issues, within the context of implementing the proposed model:

- The balance between internal and external assessment within a new system, with examinations continuing to form part of the new approach, where appropriate.
- How better to integrate 'academic' and 'vocational' qualifications and the language that should be used to describe courses and programmes.
- The potential to adopt a digital learning profile that would allow evidence to be gathered effectively.
- The changes considered necessary to the wider education system to support future reform of qualifications and assessment.

Analysis

Q1: Do the three areas described offer learners the potential to gather and reflect a broader range of achievements important for their future progress? Is there anything you would add or delete?

CCG discussions

The CCG groups generally agreed with the proposal that the new model would both continue to offer learners opportunities to demonstrate achievement in subjects and have greater opportunities to demonstrate wider achievements.

Positive statements from the CCG groups associated with this included:

- The Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA or the Diploma) should/will be available to all learners.
- It offers opportunities to reflect a broader range of the learners' knowledge, skills and achievements, and it will collect a greater depth of information about student learning.
- It meets the needs of a broader constituency of learners, with some learners and parents/carers commenting that the proposals offer the potential to be more responsive to young people with learning difficulties/disabilities than current approaches.
- It is more flexible and responsive to learners' interests generally, which may increase interest in the curriculum and improve attendance.
- It will prepare learners for future learning and assessment approaches.

Challenges: CCG respondents considered that implementation of the model would be challenging. The main issues highlighted were as follows:

- A view needs to be taken about the relative weightings between the three elements.
- Work will need to be undertaken to ensure all three elements of the model can be delivered successfully.
- The need to ensure the benefits of exams, such as structure, objectivity and motivation, were not lost; and to ensure that provisions for early leavers were put in place.
- A need to ensure that a framework of clear and effective assessment is put in place for across the range of assessment approaches.

- A number of implementation issues, including measures to promote awareness of the new model among stakeholders; measures to address equalities issues; and measures to support rural settings.

“The three areas do offer the learner greater opportunity to show to an employer or FE a broader range of their achievements and this is very welcome by business... [I] am interested in the weighting of each area in the achievement of the overall qualification.” – [CCG discussions: Those who use qualifications]

School and College survey

Many survey respondents were positive about the proposed model, with learners and parents/carers especially likely to draw out its benefits. However, many of these respondents either qualified their support by commenting the proposals needed further work to demonstrate how they could be implemented successfully, or said they doubted the proposals would be delivered effectively.

Overall, most of the survey respondents raised concerns about the model.

The issues raised by the School and College respondents were very similar to the CCGs: the balance between the elements of the proposed model; delivering the three elements of the model successfully; and assessment issues. A number of implementation issues were also raised including addressing learner disengagement; ensuring the model’s requirements fits with the way colleges deliver education; ensuring the model recognises/supports Gaelic Medium Education; and taking the needs of highly able learners into account.

“I agree with all three [elements of the model] as appropriate visionary concepts; the challenge is going to be making it possible to deliver these in a manageable, sustainable, equitable and consistent way across schools.” – [School and College survey: School community]

“I don't think this is in any way workable. What I'm reading here is a potentially ideal system for educating adults. Not children. Have you any idea how stressed-out students of school age become over internal assessments and evidence gathering as it stands today. To add more would be intolerable. Leave the system as it is with progress in subject areas.” – [School and College survey: School community]

Subject Studies

Q2: What are your views on the proposals for recognising achievements in subjects/curricular areas?

CCG discussions

In the main, CCGs agreed with the model's approach to Subject Studies – they were positive about the change this model would represent in terms of moving away from the Scottish education system's emphasis on achievement in exam-based academic subjects. Many did, however, feel this would require a significant cultural shift among key stakeholder groups (employers, universities, parents/carers, educators etc.) to appreciate the value of the new proposals (e.g., around progressive two-year courses and different modes of assessment). Despite these positive views, most CCGs felt that development work would be required to successfully implement the Subject Studies approach.

What CCGs liked about the proposals for Subject Studies

There were several positive aspects of the proposals identified by CCGs, with three key themes standing out in responses:

The move towards fewer exams: CCGs agreed with the need to move away from 'excessive grading' and the 'two-term dash' which is impressed upon school leaders/teachers in Scotland because of having external examinations in subjects every year during the Senior Phase. They often spoke of the impact annual examinations have on learners, teachers and leaders in terms of stress/mental health, and the lack of time this affords teachers in terms of giving their students a rounded, engaging and stimulating curricula.

Greater flexibility: CCGs mentioned flexibility in terms of how learners gain qualifications, including alternative non-exam-based forms of assessment and a greater mix of internal/external assessment (where teacher judgement plays a more central role). They supported the model's capacity to embrace individual learners' needs in a subject context and assessments being tailored to each subject. Many, especially learners and parents of children with additional support needs, welcomed the proposals. They felt the proposals offered learners opportunities to demonstrate a broad range of learning assessed through their coursework.

Two-year subjects/courses/programmes: CCGs supported the approach whereby courses were progressive, and learners would 'accumulate credits' to demonstrate their achievements over this period. They considered this would promote progression/broader learning in a subject area and reduce exam-related stress that is induced by the current system. They also felt the graduated approach would make some subjects more accessible to learners who would struggle in an exit exam if it was worth 100% of the qualification grade.

CCGs queries/concerns

Despite a positive response to the proposals around Subject Studies overall, many felt the model raised several questions in terms of how Subject Studies/courses might run in practice. Many of these queries/concerns were about the very aspects

of the model that CCGs broadly agreed with (e.g., greater flexibility around assessment type/balance of internal/external assessment). The queries/concerns raised by CCGs are highlighted in order of prevalence below:

Assessment issues: Most commonly, CCGs felt it would be key to ensure that alternative forms of assessment (e.g., observation, project-based work, practical tasks, presentations etc.) and internal assessments are as robust as the current external examination model. They felt this was critical for the overall success, belief and confidence in the model. Issues raised included the following.

- Time that will be required for teachers to create robust internal assessments.
- The need for clarity on measurement (e.g., which elements will be measured, will changes to the assessment of subjects be required); if/how weighting should be applied across the approaches; and resolving concerns around consistency and comparability to ensure parity for learners and transparency for those using qualifications (universities/colleges/employers).
- The balance of assessment types within individual subjects (and in particular, the balance between exams and coursework), whether this would be set nationally or in agreement with individual learners.
- Those who did not welcome a broadening of assessment approaches raised concerns about comparability and consistency; fears that teachers and or learners could 'game' the system; and concerns that it will become increasingly difficult to 'police' coursework as AI technologies such as ChatGPT become more available.

Stakeholders: Many CCGs were concerned about confidence in the new approach to Subject Studies, particularly among parents and users (employers and academic institutions). CCGs felt these groups would need educating about the value of alternative forms of assessment and proof that these are as fair/trustworthy as external examinations.

Time pressures: A few CCGs – typically the research audience – were also concerned that learners' time for Subject Studies would potentially be reduced in order to complete the Personal Pathway and Learning in Context. This could lead to a narrowing of subject choice (which would have a negative impact on some learners). Support/buy-in from subject teachers and other stakeholders, and possibly some subject re-design could be required.

Exam issues: A minority raised a concern around the final exam – and what happens if a learner fails this, but they have accumulated credits earlier in the course. This group of CCGs felt there should be a clear mechanism for tracking and accrediting achievements throughout the two-year learning and development phase. A few were concerned that learners would become deskilled at sitting major external exams.

Learner choice: Others raised concerns about various practicalities of learner choice, including:

- Learners leaving before the end of the Senior Phase (S6) and whether this group would be able to complete a qualification based on what they had learned.
- Learners dropping a course partway through the Senior Phase (S4/S5) and whether they would sit an exam or whether an accumulation of credits from fourth/fifth year would suffice.
- Learners wanting to do a ‘crash’ Higher in S5/S6 after not choosing that particular course at S4.
- A few CCGs were concerned about how specific elements of the changes to Subject Studies will be communicated to key audiences. They were either concerned about how employers might interpret the results of Subject Studies or how learners are made aware of the different types of assessments that will be available to them (and understand which types of assessment work best for them).

Equity: Finally, a few CCGs raised concerns about inequalities that exist across schools (i.e., between the most and least advantaged schools) and wanted reassurances that the new model would not exacerbate these inequalities (either by curriculum choices on offer, or differing approaches to internal assessment).

“As long as there's an assessor and validation framework in place, to me, it doesn't matter who's actually doing that [the assessment process], as long as it is standardised and robust.” – [CCG discussions: Those who design, develop and offer qualifications]

“Agree with the proposal and welcome the flexibility in how the learner gains the subject qualification. As an employer, we often need a certain qualification level for entry to our programmes but we are less interested in how they gained the qualification. Continual assessment or exam would have the same weighting for us.” – [CCG discussions: User of qualifications]

School and College survey

There was a tangible split among respondents to the School and College survey in terms of their views on the model's approach to Subject Studies – although many were positive, a greater proportion had reservations about the proposals for Subject Studies. Overall, teachers were most negative about the proposals, whereas learners tended to be more positive.

What School and College survey respondents liked about the proposals for

Subject Studies

School and College survey respondents were most positive about reducing the number of exams that learners sit during the Senior Phase. They agreed with the underlying assumption of the proposals that continual assessment is better for students/teachers in terms of stress (removing the 'two-term dash' prevalent in S4-S6) and that it leads to a better learning environment. They also argued that exam performance is rarely representative of future progress and achievement in higher/further education or in the workplace.

Linked to this, some School and College survey respondents liked the emphasis on continual assessment in the proposals. They felt this moves towards a model that puts the learner at the centre of their education. They agreed capturing achievements and evidence throughout the school year is a more accurate reflection of a learner's capabilities. They agreed that some pupils perform better in exams whereas others might benefit from a portfolio style approach of internal assessment. They felt this was fairer – as some learners aren't suited to the traditional external examination approach – and accessibility would make continuing education appealing to more learners, and successful outcomes would be more likely.

A few School and College survey respondents welcomed the opportunity to draw on a wider range of evidence to support assessment: for example, open book exams so that learners were tested on interpretation not just memory; presentation skills, leadership, teamwork. They supported the element of learner choice and the greater flexibility/freedom this afforded learners, making education more accessible and in line with a learner's strengths.

School and College survey queries/concerns

Workload: Chief among the more critical views was the impact the proposals would have on teacher workload. They mentioned the impact continuous internal assessment would have on workloads in terms of planning/supporting/marketing/maintaining standards, as well as additional CPD/training needed to equip teachers with the skills to design, deliver and grade robust internal assessments. They were also conscious that the proposals state the balance between internal and external assessment would differ between subjects and worried about the strain this would have on teachers in different subject areas. They sought reassurances about the impact the proposals would have on teacher workload.

Assessment issues: Several School and College survey respondents favoured retention of annual examinations. It was not always clear from responses whether this group preferred only external examination assessments, but they were often critical of the internal assessment proposals and wanted more detail about what these assessments would comprise of and how they would be validated. Reasons cited include: they provide structure for learners; prepare students for work/life; are the most consistent/comparable method of assessment; and are trusted by wider stakeholders. They provide learners with exam practice and motivation. They also force learners to keep on top of their studies and not fall too far behind.

There were also many comments relating to the implementation of the Subject Studies proposals, including:

- Queries about what would happen to learners who work towards the exit exam but then do not complete: e.g., whether they would still receive a qualification, and what this qualification would look like.
- Clarification on what happens to learners who decide they have made the wrong decision in terms of their subject study choices and want to change part way through their two-year course: e.g., what would be the status of achievement/qualification in terms of accumulated credit; and would the learner be able to take a different subject in the second year of the two-year course to replace the course that had been dropped.
- Clarification on when the two-year subject study courses would begin and end (S4-S5, S5-S6) and how this would affect the composition of the classroom in terms of having pupils in the same classroom studying for one and two-year courses and/or at different stages of the qualification.
- Detail on the balance of internal and external assessments in each subject and how this would be determined.
- Further consideration of how learner choice (in terms of assessment/subject study/progression over two years) would be delivered in practice. Some School and College survey respondents raised concerns that learners may not be able to select the most appropriate subjects and assessment types for themselves. Most of these responses were from teachers.
- Clarification on how internal assessments will be monitored/reviewed to ensure robust and consistent processes are in place across Scotland.
- How the potential for learners to use AI when undertaking coursework and project work will be addressed.

“We like the idea of reduced external assessments as long as kids are not set up to fail by gambling by not getting qualifications at N5 and going onto Higher.” – [School and College survey: School community]

“I think progress should be celebrated however that looks for the individual. I think it’s important that children have a choice of mode in how coursework is assessed, which plays to their strengths e.g., create a video, write an essay, prepare a talk - as long as the knowledge and skills are shared with the assessor it shouldn’t matter the mode.” – [School and College survey: School community]

“This is unworkable. Teachers have no time to work collaboratively and even less to continually assess and moderate.” – [School and College survey: School community]

Learning in Context

Q3: What are your views on the proposals for recognising achievements in knowledge and skills in action?

CCG discussions

What CCGs like about the proposals for Learning in Context

The CCG discussions on the Learning in Context element were on the whole positive, with learners especially enthusiastic. The key benefits identified included that learners would develop skills for future careers; prepare for employment, university and for adult life; have opportunities to explore (new) areas of interest; connect and transfer learning and skills into other areas of study; and demonstrate what they had learned in an applied setting.

None of the CCG discussions was negative, but all raised some issues for further development. The main issues discussed were developing a practical framework for implementing this element; resolving assessment issues; and addressing implementation concerns. Several groups also mentioned issues relating to equity.

CCG issues in relation to Learning in Context

Guidance

It was felt that clear parameters are required to clarify what the Learning in Context element should encompass, how it will be delivered, and how it will be assessed/verified. Some respondents suggested that the Scottish Baccalaureate⁴ could provide a starting point for the development of guidance, and some suggested the UN Sustainable Development Goals⁵ could inform the context, especially for equity issues.

Objectives: Clear objectives for undertaking the project were considered critical. One respondent suggested adding 'attributes' to 'knowledge' and 'skills' as the core objectives for this element, in line with Scotland's refreshed curriculum⁶.

Scope: The guidance should set out clearly what will be achievable (e.g., how big the project should be), to manage expectations. It was suggested the guidance

4 What are Scottish Baccalaureates? - Find out more - SQA

5 THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)

6 Scotland's curriculum refresh

could provide information on the types of projects learners could consider, with options from topic suggestions through to fully developed resource packs.

Buy-in: It was suggested that a set of guidance, in clear accessible language would assist in explaining/promoting this element to a wide range of stakeholders including learners, parents/carers, colleges, universities and employers.

Assessment

There was considerable discussion within and across the groups as to whether Learning in Context should be assessed and, if so, if it should be graded. Some CCGs expressed concerns about whether and how the skills component could be quantified/measured.

Some CCG respondents considered a pass/fail option, although there was a general view that a 'fail' would not be appropriate. Likewise, levels/grades were considered, but respondents struggled to resolve an equitable/consistent way these could be applied to projects covering such widely varying issues/types of evidence.

Respondents were clear that, regardless of the decision on assessment, provisions must be put in place to ensure/verify the learners' work **is** their work, and to ensure consistent standards are being adopted nationally.

Implementation

The CCG groups offered several suggestions for developing the projects. These included a focus on experiential learning; and topic areas including employability, sustainability, creativity, health and wellbeing, independent living including personal finance, and social studies.

The CCG groups offered several suggestions for the delivery of Learning in Context, with many suggesting partnering with existing programme such as the Daydream Believers⁷; working closely with colleges, who already deliver interdisciplinary learning (IDL) and project-based courses; partnering with local businesses/ employers to design, deliver and potentially assess projects; and drawing on best practice examples from settings that already deliver successful IDL/project-based learning.

Resource: Several CCG respondents mentioned the need for adequate time and resource to be allocated to planning/development for this change; including staff training; staff time allocated to preparation and supporting learners; and time in the school day for learners to undertake the projects.

7 Daydream Believers - Daydream Believers

Timetable: CCG respondents wondered just how flexible this element was likely to be in practice and noted that currently learners face constraints on subject choices. They stressed settings will need support and guidance to maximise flexibility.

Equity issues

Many of the CCG respondents were concerned that equity issues will present a challenge to delivering this element of the SDA. For example, issues relating to the setting itself: those located in lower socio-economic and rural areas were likely to have fewer resources and be able to offer opportunities to their learners. In addition, students from disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to enjoy opportunities through family contacts, paid activities, and so on; while young people with additional support needs, those with English as a second language, those from minority communities and home learners are also likely to also experience additional barriers accessing opportunities.

Several of the CCG respondents commented that there was a need to be transparent about these inequalities and the challenges they placed on this element. They felt that it was important that settings, and other stakeholders including the Scottish Government, worked to address these inequalities, support the learners affected, and ensure all learners get an opportunity to be fully engaged.

“Absolutely amazing for career pathways – knowing what you want to get into, you could choose a project that gives you taste of that and choose something that helps you get there!” – [CCG discussions: Learners]

“It gives us much more to chat about in the interview situation than just the straightforward subjects. So, definitely wholeheartedly in favour of it.” – [CCG discussions: Those who use qualifications]

School and College survey

Some respondents, in particular learners and colleges, were very positive about this element of the model, with respondents mentioning the key benefits from undertaking project work around a topic of personal interest as motivating learners; developing skills in a range of disciplines; developing vital work skills; and encouraging innovation and creativity.

Other respondents, while typically welcoming the proposals, often felt that more detail on the Learning in Context framework was required, especially in relation to implementation and assessment.

Many respondents were negative about the proposal. Respondents mentioned there were already interdisciplinary opportunities within schools (e.g., Youth Philanthropy Initiative Scotland and Saltire Awards). Some commented that this approach was reasonably successful and did not need to be amended. Most felt it

had not been successful and were concerned that project work element would not be effectively integrated into the curriculum.

Several referenced current experience of the Scottish Baccalaureate. This is an SCQF-levelled qualification, which includes an interdisciplinary project. Because this is a formally graded qualification, the interdisciplinary project is subject to national guidelines and externally verified by the SQA. Respondents commented there may be lessons to be learned from this approach.

One of the responses to the School and College survey suggested that if the overriding objective of the element is to undertake a project designed to develop key skills (such as collaboration, task planning, problem solving, group work, resilience, and creativity), then that should be the focus, and there should not be requirement for the project to tackle a significant issue or be interdisciplinary.

Guidance on requirements

Many of the respondents commented that guidance on how this element would be structured would be helpful, and suggested this should be developed and supported nationally. Examples of what the guidance should address included the following.

- Information/advice on who should lead and develop the projects.
- Project resourcing: ideas for projects, specifications, sponsors/contacts, funding and other resources, and so on.
- Assessment and validation: one respondent suggested the meta skills framework⁸ (or something very similar) could be formally adopted and supported.
- Exemplar materials: these could include examples of projects, assessment protocols, and some best practice examples from settings already undertaking project work and IDL. External bodies, including scrutiny and research bodies, could assist with the design/development of project examples.

Implementation

Respondents identified a number of implementation issues they felt could be a barrier to delivering the Learning in Context element effectively.

Delivery: There were concerns that some learners do not have the maturity, knowledge or skills to undertake independent project-based learning. Some suggested that very small groups with significant levels of staff support could be required to maintain motivation and support learning outcomes, for example, just

8 meta-skills-progression-framework-final.pdf (skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

S6. One respondent suggested introducing a scaled-down version of IDL earlier (e.g., during S1-3) to help scaffold the necessary skills.

Workload issues: Many respondents felt a key issue would be identifying the source of additional staffing resources to support this new element.

Teacher training: Several respondents commented that the proposal demands additional skills from subject teachers, and that support for new teachers through initial teacher education (ITE) and ongoing support for all teaching staff through continuing professional development (CPD)/career-long professional learning (CLPL) would be essential.

Other implementation issues: A small number of other implementation issues were also raised:

- Provision is needed for learners who move school during the year before they have completed their project; to support teamwork/fieldwork elements; and to provide completion time (especially if the new school has finished their IDL element).
- Timetabling: two main issues were identified. The current timetable structure (typically 50-minute slots) creates a barrier to undertaking meaningful project work; and difficulties designing timetables to accommodate staff from different disciplines working together on IDL projects.
- Pilot/gradual roll out: phased/pilot rollouts were suggested by some, to test this element of the model to see how it works in practice and to give settings an opportunity to adapt.
- Implementation planning: respondents suggested an implementation programme should be developed in consultation with practising teachers. Several respondents stressed that sufficient time and resources would need to be allocated to the development process.

Assessment issues

Several issues in relation to assessing this element were raised.

- A few respondents asked generally how the project work would be assessed, if it would be given a pass/fail mark or if would be given a grade.
- Respondents asked how consistency of assessment within/between schools would be achieved; several suggested national standards and/or guidance should be developed. Topics to be included: numeracy, literacy, and meta-skills.
- Linked to this, they asked how the assessment of the project would relate to the marking of single subjects.

- There were further concerns about individual subject teachers assessing IDL projects given projects could reasonably cover three or four subject areas.
- Concerns were raised about differential levels of support (teachers, private tutors, parents/carers, possibly AI) that learners may have access to, and how that will be addressed in the assessment.
- Further, given the projects are learner-led, any two projects could vary enormously in scale, complexity and difficulty. Will degree of difficulty be taken into account during the assessment.
- Several respondents asked if there was an intention for the project to be externally marked or verified.

Other issues

Equity: One respondent felt this element may be particularly challenging for learners with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Another felt schools in more affluent areas will be able to offer projects with substantial opportunities and chances to develop their skills, while schools in lower socio-economic areas may not be able to offer as many opportunities/may have to prioritise staff resources on core skills.

Literacy: Several respondents expressed concerns about the suitability of this element for learners with literacy and numeracy difficulties, who may not be motivated to participate in project work.

Perception by employers/university: Several respondents considered that universities and employers would continue to be only/mainly interested in Subject Studies.

“Lovely idea, but really? This will be a nightmare to organise and collate the data, most pupils who opt in and have support at home will do it because they have to, not because they want to. Staff will be left chasing up those pupils who have no interest and get little or no support at home.” – [School and College survey, School community]

Personal Pathway

Q4: What are your views on the proposals designed to recognise achievements in respect of personal learning?

CCG discussions

What the CCGs liked about the Personal Pathway

The CCGs welcomed this proposal: stating that it promotes opportunities for achievement beyond academic learning, the chance to participate in activities they might not have otherwise had the opportunity; and could be particularly valuable for young people who were doing less well in subject areas.

It gives learners the opportunity to broaden their learning, reflect on their experience and to evidence it. Teachers highlighted that, as well as providing valuable opportunities for non-academic learners, these proposals would force schools to offer more choices and meet the needs of all their learners. From the perspective of users of qualifications, the proposed element was really exciting, it offered a way to learn more about the learner, and possibly an opportunity to discriminate between several applicants with the 'same' qualifications.

Guidance and implementation

Guidance: Some commented that guidance, or information, on what the Personal Pathway entailed would be very useful. There was a concern that people would think that it was just about formal/certified activities, like The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Being clear that it was far broader would ensure stronger engagement from learners, and greater understanding from other stakeholders.

Opportunities: Some respondents commented that it was important to ensure there were opportunities for learners to participate in Gaelic and in ethnic minority languages and different cultural activities.

Social, cultural, economic strands: Few respondents commented specifically on the proposal that each learner would include evidence in a range of areas. A few sought greater clarity on the three strands set out in the proposals. For example, it was suggested the economic strand could include more explicit reference to employability and skills for work; and the social strand could offer opportunities to introduce social enterprise, peer education, community activism and so on. It was also suggested requiring learners to demonstrate achievements across all three strands should be revisited, given the equity concerns that have been expressed.

Resources and support: There were real concerns, even among some who were very enthusiastic about what this element promised, that in practice it was just not realistic. The learners CCG were concerned that timetabling constraints and limited opportunities would mean they would not have the flexibility to choose to do what they wanted; while lack of time outwith school hours, lack of support from teaching staff and lack of support from wider networks would further limit their opportunities/success.

Assessment

Light touch validation: There was a broad consensus that the Personal Pathway activity should be validated. There was also general agreement that this element would not benefit from graded assessment.

Embracing and supporting difference: Respondents highlighted that some learners, for example neurodivergent young people, will find gathering and presenting information more challenging than others. Solutions suggested included: additional CPD training for teachers, destigmatising help and support; and building support into the system right from the start (not as an add-on/afterthought).

Evidence collection: There was an expectation that learners would lead on evidence collection, with minimal support and guidance from staff. Respondents generally considered that a digital approach to collecting evidence for this element would be essential, with a few suggesting an app would be helpful.

Data management: Real concerns/questions were raised about the management of the evidence collected. In particular, CCGs discussed issues around consent and ownership of the data, especially as the evidence collected would almost certainly include images and information relating to leisure activities/employment/caring responsibilities/volunteering activities. The types of questions that respondents raised were:

- Would teachers have access to this information; would they be able to edit it?
- Would the school retain images/information once the project was completed/assessed?
- Would learners be penalised for redacting private information?
- Who would see each learner's Personal Pathway information?

Some respondents were concerned that learners could be obliged to collect and share personal information (for example a young person who cares for family members with health or addiction problems; someone who volunteers with vulnerable people; someone who coaches a youth team). It was also suggested that some young people may not realise until too late that they could be adversely affected by sharing intimate aspects of their lives: and settings must be prepared to identify such cases and provide timely and individualised support.

Equity

There were significant concerns in relation to inequity with many commenting that the element was biased in favor of learners from affluent/socially advantaged homes who would be able to easily arrange, participate in and afford extracurricular activities. Almost all the respondents highlighted inequalities, noting for example that learners in lower socio-economic areas and rural areas lack access to the same opportunities as city learners from affluent families.

However, several respondents felt that although inequality was clearly an issue, that did not mean the element should not be offered, but that work should be undertaken to address the challenges identified.

Other issues raised

Volunteering roles: One CCG respondent cautioned that they are finding it really hard to get volunteering opportunities for staff in their company and suggested early discussions with key organisations such as the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) to discuss the implications of the potential increase in demand and how best to manage it, would help delivery of this element.

Private life: Some of the respondents felt that young people’s right to a private life should be respected. Keeping some activities ‘just for fun’ was really important.

“If I've got 50 or 60 applicants that have exactly got the same qualifications at the same grades, it's what differentiates one individual from those other 49 people that are applying for the job.” – [CCG discussions: Users of qualifications]

“Delighted to see it there, but I think this really needs to come with heavy caveats, because what I really wouldn't want to see is young people whose parents can't support or pay for them to embrace on outside of school experiences, and not even just pay for them, but give the kind of psychological and emotional support that goes with all of these things too. To be excluded or to be even pushed further down the pecking order, because that particular part of their journey isn't being highlighted enough. So, sorry, I'm just a wee bit conflicted about it.” – [CCG discussions: Those who design, development offer qualifications]

School and College survey

What respondents to the School and College survey liked about the Personal

Pathway element

Many School and College survey respondents welcomed the proposal for a Personal Pathway for a range of reasons, including the following:

- Provides an opportunity for them to be recognised for their extracurricular activities.
- Encourages learners to recognise the skills they are developing in everyday life.
- Learners can take responsibility for their own learning via participation in the extracurricular activities.

- Learners contribute more to the community and volunteer in different organisations.
- Opens up a more diverse range of areas for learners to achieve in.
- Learners can fully consider what they want to do when they leave education.
- An opportunity to reflect on achievements, but from a wider perspective than just their grades.
- An opportunity to appreciate and celebrate different cultures.
- Recognises the abilities and interests of less academic students.

Issues and concerns

Overall, respondents in the School and College survey were more negative about the Personal Pathway proposal. This was especially the case for responses from teachers and from colleges. Their key concerns were that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas would have far fewer opportunities to achieve than others; concerns issues relating to the assessment/validation of the evidence, and some particular concerns about the data collection process itself; and concerns about the staff time, training and general resources that would be required to deliver the element effectively.

Equity

Many of the respondents raised concerns about unequal access to opportunities. The factors included limited family support/assistance to provide motivation and support to access volunteering/internship/work placements; low household income to fund things like cultural, sports, and social activities; learners with additional support needs and health inequalities; care experienced young people; and the location of the school/college, which impacts on the availability of opportunities available locally. Digital exclusion will also be important as access to ICT and other technologies is likely to be required to support evidence collection and presentation.

Many respondents thought measures should be put in place so that those from disadvantaged backgrounds/lower socio-economic areas could benefit from the opportunities offered by the Personal Pathway. Suggestions included delivering opportunities via schools; scaffolding support; increasing the number of specialist staff; funding places on existing programmes such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award; and one-to one ICT provision to enable evidence collection. However, many felt addressing systemic inequalities would be challenging and very resource intensive, with some concluding that on balance it may not be successful.

Assessment

A number of issues related to assessment were raised.

Mandatory: Several respondents questioned whether this element would/should be mandatory. Some raised specific concerns that learners could be required to provide information about their private lives/activities to the school/state to receive their Diploma.

Validation and assessment: There was a general view that some form of verification or oversight of this element would be required. Some suggested that a national framework and/or assessment guidelines would be helpful, to ensure consistency across topics/themes and across the country. If this element is to be measured, then a set of standardised assessment measures/metrics, together with guidance, should also be provided.

Value of activities: Some respondents suggested guidance/clarity on the types of activities that would be eligible/ineligible for Personal Pathway would be helpful. Who will determine which activities will count towards evidence of achievement? How will they decide which activities learners can/can't use for the Personal Pathway?

Oversight: Respondents sought clarification on who would be responsible for assessing, participation, and outcomes. It was noted that many young people will already be participating in award programmes that are externally assessed, such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, The Saltire Award, etc., – will further validation of these course be required?

Evidence collection: Many sought clarification on who would be responsible for collection of evidence for the Personal Pathway, with most assuming that learners would have primary responsibility for evidence collection. This raised several concerns: staff felt supporting learners to complete the evidence-based requirements would be very time intensive; ensuring learners have access to suitable digital technology could be resource intensive; verification and assessment could become complex as the variety of evidence that learners submit widened.

Other assessment issues:

- Managing the paperwork for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is currently very time consuming; this approach could not be scaled up to a large number learners.
- Concerns about creeping commercialisation as a consequence of these proposals; for example, new digital platforms for evidence collection and firms setting up to deliver opportunities for learners.
- Administrative burdens being placed on local/private organisations. Will organisations/clubs etc. be asked to provide verification evidence for learners? There were concerns this may result in their withdrawing places from learners.

Implementation

The main issues highlighted in relation to implementation were as follows:

- **Resources:** Respondents commented that many learners, especially those without access to ICT, ICT skills and support from peers/family, will struggle to manage this element independently. Even those most enthusiastic about the approach felt that staffing, budget and other resources are needed to support learners with this element.
- **Time:** Many respondents felt that time will need to be allocated within the school day both to support learners to participate in projects and to assist with collating/documenting evidence from activities.
- **Specialist staff:** Respondents were generally unclear where the staffing responsibility for this element would lie, and this would need to be resolved. A few suggested pastoral care/pupil support/guidance teachers, but stressed these staff are under significant time pressure, and unlikely to have capacity to take on additional duties.
- **Co-ordination with existing programmes/bodies:** Several respondents referred to ongoing school-based and national initiatives from which lessons can be learnt. For example: The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, The Saltire Awards and Sports Leader Awards, Foundation Apprenticeships; John Muir; Young Enterprise.

Other issues raised

- **Commercial exploitation:** A few respondents were concerned learners' data could be exploited if a commercial organisation is used for the data management.
- **Focus:** A few respondents were concerned that gathering evidence would become the core activity, not the learning experience.

“We have concerns that this type of model is much easier for pupils who are already engaged in activities and who have parents/carers who support such engagement with both time and financial resources. Schools would have to be able to tap into active schools, youth and community networks; and to support all pupils to achieve this would have significant implications in relation to capacity. The principle of 'all have the opportunity to engage' in this would be challenging to resource.” – [School and College survey: School community]

“The unfortunate reality is that pupils will struggle en masse to sustain upkeep of such records, and a significant administrative burden will then sit with schools in terms of catch-up tasks unless time is set aside in school to facilitate this.” – [School and College survey: School community]

Scottish Diploma of Achievement

Q5: What are your views on the idea of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement for all learners in Scotland?

Q:5a: If you support this idea, what actions should be taken to make this approach work in practice? What alternative would you propose that would be consistent with the vision and principles identified in Phase One of the Review?

CCG discussions

Generally, the CCGs welcomed the proposal to introduce the Scottish Diploma of Achievement (the SDA or the Diploma). In particular, the learner CCG was in favour of this proposal: they felt it would recognise broader achievements and was accessible to a broader range of learners.

Implementation

Consultation with stakeholders: Some CCGs commented that consultation will be critical to effect successful transition to the new model. For example, universities mentioned they will need much more information to prepare for the changes, e.g., it would be helpful to have clarity/information about learners' grades in S5 so they will be in a position to start making offers/conditional offers, rather than having to wait until S6.

Implementation plan: Some CCGs stressed that a fully worked through implementation plan would be required. This would include a clear description of the roles and responsibilities of those involved, including teaching and non-teaching staff; and setting out resource, engagement and communication strategies. Examples of how this could be taken forward included a collaborative approach to implementation planning that includes teachers, learners, parents, employers and wider education partners; a toolkit resource kit, to assist with engagement with employers, that includes examples of what is possible with the Diploma; and a pilot phase being undertaken by one/a few local authorities (or a period to reflect on lessons that could be drawn from relevant projects already underway). Some recommended/expected an evaluation of processes and outcomes to be built into the implementation and delivery phases.

Grading: CCGs' views on weighting were mixed: whether all three elements should be given equal weight; whether Subject Studies should be given greater weight; and whether the Diploma should simply report outcomes across all elements. Regardless, most agreed that subjects should be graded/levelled and the Diploma as a whole should not be graded.

Clear procedures have to be put in place for learners who do not achieve the Diploma, e.g., because they leave before the award is made or they do not complete the necessary requirements.

Digital platform: CCGs thought that an integrated online platform to track progress and grades, that both the learner and the teacher can access and monitor, will be essential. This will have to be compatible with the full range of operating systems, including Microsoft, and Google-based platforms on Apple/Android; by default, it must be suitable to run on a range of devices, including smartphones.

One CCG (parents/carers) commented that some learners may not want a digital profile. It was also appreciated that digital access was limited in some parts of the country. It was therefore suggested that an analogue alternative should also be considered.

Resources: CCGs stressed the need to resource the Diploma properly. Time will be needed for development and implementation; support, resources, and structures for schools will be required; training and resources will be required for teachers/college lecturers; and a great deal of work will be needed around timetabling and the structure of the school day. In addition, collaboration with partners/other stakeholders etc. will need to begin, to support learners through the Learning in Context and Personal Pathway elements: this is also likely to identify resource requirements in terms of time, staffing and funding.

“We need to highlight what young people are good at rather than them failing exams and showing what they are bad at.” – [CCG discussions: Learners]

School and College survey

Positive responses

Many of the respondents welcomed the proposals to introduce the Diploma. The main reasons for this were as follows:

- The Diploma would showcase the full range of learners’ achievements.
- It would reflect learners’ social and community-based contributions.
- It would provide a more rounded picture of a learners’ qualities and would therefore be beneficial to future employers and universities.
- The achievements and certification would align with the learner’s aspirations and next steps in their education/employment.
- It would offer opportunities to reflect the attainments of all learners, not just the most academically able.

Many commented that presenting the profile digitally was especially helpful. It could contain a much fuller record of achievements than a traditional paper certificate, allow easy access to the information, and could be updated.

Many of those welcoming the proposals qualified their support, commenting they would need more information about the proposals; clarity around how it would be used for accessing employment/academic placements; and reassurance around validation processes. They also expressed some concerns with respect to equity.

Implementation

However, many School and College survey respondents, mainly teachers, expressed reservations about the proposals. They too felt more information was needed before they could decide; they felt that the SDA would result in a substantial amount of additional work for teaching staff; had concerns relating to assessment and validation; had concerns about credibility/buy-in from key stakeholders; concerns relating to equity; and felt that it was a largely untested and possibly unnecessary change.

Proposal underdeveloped: Many felt unable to comment at this stage as there were not enough details about the proposal. Many likened the Diploma to the Scottish Baccalaureate, and often noted that the interest/uptake of this was very low.

Exams and assessment: Respondents felt that more information is needed on how the Diploma will be monitored and assessed. There were concerns that the inequality gap between learners may widen, and they were concerned that the Diploma might not be suitable for all learners.

More detailed work is required on how the components of the Diploma will be assessed: with single units and/or the use of final examinations, and how this relates to the overall picture of the Diploma.

Many called for a framework to be created to ensure consistency, and to ensure the values and principles of the SDA are upheld. This would support a recognised standardised system for all Scottish schools and colleges, whereby grades and assessment can be tracked and monitored.

Funding and resources: Many respondents voiced concerns over what they might reasonably be expected to achieve, given the current lack of funding and resources available to many schools and colleges. Respondents were clear that the SDA has to be properly resourced if it is to be successful: in terms of time for planning and development; staffing levels and training; promotion; implementation time (school day); and budget.

Workload: Some respondents were concerned about an increase in workload and general administration on top of their already busy schedules. It was suggested the new system would need to be streamlined to minimise wasted time. The approach would need to maintain the learner's motivation and attention, with accountability falling on them rather than teachers. Support workers with a specified role helping learners work towards completion of the Diploma would be essential.

Credibility: Many were concerned potential employers and universities would understand the new system. There were particular concerns that the Diploma would create a further distinction between the Scottish and English systems and might adversely impact Scottish learners wishing to move into higher education/ seek employment in England and beyond.

Equality: Many felt they either could not support the Diploma or held serious reservations, because of equality issues. They noted that without substantial funding and increases in staffing levels, the Learning in Context and Personal Pathway elements would reinforce inequalities.

Major change: Several respondents commented that the proposals for the Diploma represented a major shift in the way schools operate and in how learners are assessed. They stressed it can only be successful if there is a true commitment to implementing and delivering the Diploma, and to promoting it to the stakeholders who will be using it.

The name: Some suggested that the name should be changed, as the term 'Diploma' is associated with awards made at further/higher education level.

Other suggestions:

- Public, private, and tertiary sectors would need to be involved for the Diploma to be effectively communicated to those outside the school/college community.
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved need to be clearly defined; there should be teams providing and developing the support.
- There is a need for a standardised collaborative approach to ensure all schools and colleges fully understand the Diploma.

"I would support it. My ADHD neurodiverse daughter has skills which go currently unrecognised, and this lowers self-esteem when recognition is only academically acknowledged." – [School and College survey: Other]

"It will be a massive time suck. Teachers will spend hundreds of hours putting it together and the benefits will be minimal. It will have no prestige, and students will recognise that it is a waste of their time. It is not a school's job to do this. Schools should educate children. The Scottish Diploma seems to be a set of ideas on how to do everything BUT educate children... It will be a massive, ongoing, dispiriting waste of time for all involved. And it is not a teacher's job to do it. We teach our subjects. Let us be good at that. Let us get better at that. Allow students to do the Duke of Edinburgh's Award if they want to do all these things. But do not expect schools to divert classroom time and teachers' time to this." – [School and College survey: School community]

Qualifications and assessment system

Q6: What changes to existing practice, if any, would you recommend to support the development of a new qualifications and assessment system?

CCG discussions

The key issues raised during the CCG discussions were as follows:

- Stakeholder communications: The importance of communicating the changes to stakeholders to ensure that everyone understands what the qualifications are, what they represent and how they should be interpreted/used by HE/FE institutions and employers. Ensuring buy-in and commitment from all parties and stakeholders was considered key to the success of the new model.
- Resourcing: It is critical to ensure schools/colleges (i.e., teachers/leaders) have the time, skills/tools and resources to deliver the new qualifications in a way that meets the goals of the model. This was felt to be particularly important in terms of ensuring consistency in approach across Scotland.
- Best practice: Sharing best practice will be important in the first few years of implementation; it will provide a continuous feedback loop, helping to ensure learners get the most out of the new approaches.
- Priorities: The need to shift accountability focus to 'what matters most': skills profiles of young people, four 'capacities' as outlined in the CfE, positive destinations (HE/FE, high-quality employment).
- Inspections: A shift is needed in terms of inspections, to focus less on grading schools via a 'national template', and towards what individual schools offer their learners in terms of a rounded education in Subject Studies.

“Real change will require genuine commitment with associated space and time to upskill practitioners and create time in timetables for new approaches to be delivered.” – [CCG discussions: Those who design, develop and offer qualifications]

“It's all important, society needs to change and this would be a huge culture shock for Scotland requiring change from everyone. Get rid of league tables and stats because they will always bring us back to the subjects. Professional learning will also be of the utmost importance, a huge amount of planning and up-skilling to do.” – [CCG discussions: Curriculum]

School and College survey

Respondents to the schools and college survey highlighted several changes they would make to existing practice to support the development of the new qualifications and assessment model.

Teacher education and training: Many respondents to the School and College survey highlighted the need to review initial teacher education, and to develop new teacher training modules focused on understanding the new model/approach. Most respondents felt that dedicated continuous professional development/career-long professional learning (CPD/CLPL) courses would be required, particularly as teachers are likely to be required to deliver assessments in an interdisciplinary context. Linked to this, they stressed that time would be required for teachers to develop the skills/tools /resources to support the new system.

Inspection: Many respondents to the School and College survey highlighted the need to review inspection processes in relation to the proposed model. They made a range of suggestions to improve inspections, in light of the proposals: pause inspections until schools had a chance to implement the new model; more frequent, interim inspections; and remove the prior warning schools are given before an inspection, as they felt the current system does not give a true account of school operations. A few felt inspections should reflect the model – i.e., be more holistic, and less focused on ratings; more about helping schools to learn and develop.

Stakeholders: Many respondents felt it was key that the changes were communicated clearly to qualification users, with a view to the new approach being widely recognised/understood, as well as setting clear expectations around what results mean in terms of a learner's performance and skills. Some felt that liaison with universities/colleges and employers was needed to develop rigorous assessment materials – as these groups understand which skills and knowledge are required for HE/FE courses/vocational qualifications and the workplace.

Other issues: Other School and College survey respondents felt change was required in the following areas to implement the new model for qualifications and assessment:

- Allowing sufficient time for teachers to develop high quality lessons and assessment tools.
- Ensuring sufficient funding is allocated to cover the additional requirements such as teacher training, developing materials, continual assessment, as well as IT.
- Some were concerned about accountability and the performance of schools in relation to the new model. They generally felt that there should be a greater focus on measuring progress and value added rather than final outcomes.

Parity of esteem

Q7: To promote parity of esteem across all qualifications, academic or technical and professional, should all qualifications at a particular SCQF level have the same name?

CCG discussions

- Many agreed that the SCQF is a good foundation for the change; and that generally, parents/carers and employers understand it. The SCQF has good credibility, is recognisable, and will provide a good framework for a standardised naming system.
- Some felt the change will make it difficult for employers to differentiate between knowledge-based qualifications and vocational-based qualifications. However, others welcome the proposals, which would express the 'level' attained by learners pursuing knowledge-based and skills-based qualifications using a common framework and language.
- Many stressed that language changes can only go so far in reshaping and challenging attitudes and perceptions of the relative merits of academic and vocational courses.

School and College survey

All qualifications at the same level should have the same name

Yes: Consultation analyses do not usually report results quantitatively, nonetheless, it is undoubtedly worth noting that just over two-fifths of the respondents simply replied 'yes' to this question.

Consistent and less confusing: Many felt that using the same name would be simpler, consistent and less confusing for everyone involved; learners, parents, teachers, universities, employers.

SCQF levels: Some felt that it would make more sense to use SCQF levels, encompassing different unit type assessments. Then achievement levels could be distinguished by looking at the number of credits a learner has accumulated within a SCQF level qualification.

All qualifications at the same level should not have the same name

Not comparable: Some felt that qualifications differ in terms of level, rigour and degree of challenge. Others felt that the name should also reflect the type of achievement and whether the qualification is academic, technical or professional.

Users of qualifications: Many questioned if the change would enable employers to understand what qualification/the level of qualification learners have achieved. Some felt that universities and employers should be consulted, to understand perceptions of the varying qualifications.

Implementation: Many felt that the name change should only happen if the process and assessment were comparable. Some felt that there would be a need to specify the distinction between technical and academic subjects, for the change to be successfully integrated and understood by all.

Additional comments about the approach

Q8: Do you have any additional comments about the proposed approach to qualifications and assessment set out in this paper?

CCG discussions

Many of the CCGs were excited by the proposals, although they also felt it was going to be a considerable challenge implementing this degree of change. They especially responded to learners being at the centre of the decisions, which they felt was refreshing to see.

Links with users of qualifications: One group suggested a dedicated coordinator to ensure the development of active links with higher education and employers. This will lead to the strengthening of the credibility of the qualifications.

Motivating parents and learners: One CCG (Informing the Process) said that the new qualifications would need to appeal to both learners and parents/carers: this will help ensure that continuous assessment coursework will be sustained and the value of this method of learning will be recognised.

Artificial intelligence: CCGs commented that AI is increasingly on teachers' minds: they are concerned over its use, especially as the balance of assessment shifts away from formal examinations to include a wider range of options. The model will need to take this into account.

School and college survey

Implementation: Some School and College survey respondents felt that much more information on implementation will be required, as they will be tasked with involving families and communities in the learners' education. Others said they would like further information, including examples, about what the changes will be like in practice. Some asked for a clear plan and timetables from implementation to the end assessment.

Budget and expenditure: A few respondents thought the proposals were designed as a cost cutting exercise, specifically to reduce exam expenditure. However, most felt there will need to be a large investment of time, resources and staff training to deliver the proposed model, and were concerned that settings would not be able to afford the changes.

Disruptive change: Some of the respondents commented that the proposed changes would be substantial and disruptive, and many felt they did not seem realistic. Some suggested there had not been enough research to justify the changes. Some asked that the government rethink the proposals completely, and not implement any of the measures set out in the review.

Feedback on the Review

Q9: Given we are now in the final phase of the Review we would be interested to receive any feedback on our approach to this important exercise.

CCG discussions

Relatively few CCGs answered this question, although those that did valued various aspects of the consultation process and were generally more positive about it than respondents to the School and College survey.

Positive feedback about the Review

Those who felt positively about the process fed back that they enjoyed the iterative nature of the Review, and the opportunity to feed in at various stages of the discussion. They also mentioned that the working groups that had been created to gather the CCG response has been productive and efficient.

Again, many mentioned the transparent and inclusive approach the Review had taken to engaging with stakeholders and this was felt to be highly positive. They felt this would offer the most rounded impression of the Review.

“Overall, the variety of approaches to engagement across the system and the differing opportunities that have been through formal written submissions, CCGs, open forums and have added hoc opportunities, has been valued and welcomed.” – [CCG Discussions: Those who design, develop and offer qualifications]

Negative feedback about the Review

Those who were more negative about the consultation approach tended to report the timescales involved (the process had felt too rushed to these groups and they queried whether the correct people had been consulted), and the lack of detail in some of the proposals that CCGs wanted more information on in order to be able to comment (e.g., lack of detail on equity/the attainment gap and how the proposals would address these problems).

School and College survey

There was a split between School and College survey respondents – some were positive about the process, but a greater proportion had negative feedback about at least one aspect of the Review.

Positive feedback about the Review

The minority that were wholly positive about the Review most commonly reported how valuable, transparent and robust the process had been, noting in particular the three-stage approach of the consultation which has afforded schools and colleges the opportunity to participate at various points throughout the Review.

Relatedly, some School and College survey respondents appreciated the breadth and depth of the Review – that those consulted included different education settings (alternative providers, mainstream schools/colleges); stakeholder types (learners, parents/carers, teachers, researchers, employers); and approaches to gathering feedback (site visits, focus groups etc.). This ‘360 view’ was felt to be inclusive – vital for any consultation.

Another, smaller group of School and College survey respondents felt the consultation process, its inclusivity and openness, was an example of the positive cultural shift needed in the Scottish education system.

“This seems to have been a more open process than the last National Conversation about Education. Thank you for ensuring that all stakeholders have had the chance to give their opinions.” – [School and College survey: School community]

Negative feedback about the Review

Those School and College survey respondents that were negative about the Review highlighted a number of areas of concern – many of which were in direct contrast to the positive aspects raised by other School and College survey respondents:

- Negative feedback focused most commonly on what School and College survey respondents felt to be the insufficient consultation of classroom teachers in specific subject areas. They worried that subject specialists were

being told to make changes to their teaching without being given the 'right to reply' about the impact of the proposals on teachers.

- Others highlighted what they perceived to be the lack of awareness raising about the Review. They felt that the Review had not been well advertised, highlighting how they had only become aware of the Review in Phase Three.
- Related to a lack of awareness, many schools complained about a lack of time given to respond to each phase of the consultation and they had a perception that the Review had been a rushed process, conducted at a busy time for schools which meant that not everyone had a voice.
- Another key objection School and College survey respondents had was a perceived lack of clarity/transparency/detail in the proposals. At all stages, these School and College survey respondents felt that not enough information was provided in the proposals for people to give a considered response.
- A minority also felt that their feedback had not been taken into account during earlier phases of the consultation and therefore did not feel any confidence in the process.

“There has not been enough consultation with those who will have to implement the proposals in the classroom. The Review was only sent out via the unions and received at the busiest time of the year as we struggle to finish courses and meet coursework deadlines. The closing date for the consultation is in the middle of the school holidays⁹. Many teachers who would have liked to respond may not even be aware of this consultation as a result of the timing and the low-key way in which the Review has been issued. This Review is time-consuming to read and respond to. Given its importance, every teacher and school should have been allocated time to study and discuss this Review.” – [School and College survey: School Community]

⁹ The closing date for the Review consultation responses was extended to the end of May.

Summary and conclusions

Overall support for the model was mixed. While many respondents were positive about the objectives underpinning the proposals, many of those responding had at least some reservations about how the model would work in practice and a significant minority outwardly rejected the proposals. This suggests there could be opposition to the model if it were to be implemented, with most School and College survey respondents and CCGs needing reassurance about the impact of the model on the educational system as a whole.

Regarding the Subject Studies aspect of the model, exams were the focus. While respondents tended to welcome a reduction in exams (from a learning quality and teacher/pupil stress perspective), most were concerned about what this would mean for learners, teachers and schools in terms of 1) alternative assessments (and how these would be agreed, developed, reviewed/evaluated, factored into teacher workload etc.), and 2) learner performance/choice (extent of choice learners would have, failing an 'exit' exam, skills learners would lose by not sitting exams regularly). More detail is needed in respect of both these issues to reassure schools/colleges and CCGs about the desirability of the model.

The Learning in Context element of the model was warmly received in the main, with many positive about the opportunity it would afford learners to deepen their knowledge/learning experience in an interdisciplinary context. There were, however, concerns around the practicalities of implementing this element of the model, ensuring that all learners learn/are assessed fairly, irrespective of individual learning needs or the education setting; the practicalities of delivering effective project-based learning; and ensuring that delivery does not impinge teachers/schools too significantly (from a workload/timetabling perspective).

CCG and School and College survey respondents generally supported the Personal Pathway element of the model in principle, but highlighted that the challenges of delivering it in practice were considerable. They could see the benefit of this particularly for learners who are not academic. However, they were concerned about equity between learners and felt this would advantage some learners (e.g., those from affluent backgrounds); many felt that further work will be required to demonstrate how **all** learners will be enabled to demonstrate achievements across meaningful extracurricular activities. A clear decision on how this element will be validated and assessed will also be required.

There was **support for the Scottish Diploma of Achievement – that would contain an easily accessible and updatable profile of the learner's achievements.** CCG and Schools and College survey respondents generally **wanted more detail** about how it would be presented and how it would be used by employers and HE/FE institutions. They felt the principal challenges to successful delivery would be related to the weighting between each element of the SDA and whether users of the SDA would understand it and have confidence in its value.

Engagement with stakeholders will be vital to ensure a smooth transition to the new approach.

CCG and School and College survey respondents were typically extremely concerned that the **model had the potential to exacerbate the inequalities that exist between schools and between learners**. The groups most affected are likely to include learners with ASN, home educated learners, young carers and learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as schools in lower socio-economic areas and rural areas. Respondents stressed that during the detailed development stage of the model, a great deal of work will be required to develop approaches to address these inequalities.

To support the introduction of the new qualifications and assessment system, respondents felt the following would need to be considered:

- Staff development: Initial teacher education and CPD will need to be developed to support the new models of learning and assessment.
- Inspections: There may be a need to reassess the focus of inspections, so they are more flexible and better able to assess what schools offer their learners in terms of a rounded education in Subject Studies/across the model.
- Development and delivery time: Many felt the Review process had been rushed considering the major changes being proposed to the education system and cautioned that adequate time should be allocated to ensure an effective transition. They felt stakeholders would need to be engaged throughout the transition phase to ensure buy-in from all those who will be affected and an implementation plan would need to be developed.

Appendices

Appendix A: Profile of the survey response

Table 1: Profile of response – sector

	Number of respondents	% of valid responses
School communities	259	83%
College communities	15	5%
Other	32	10%
Not defined	5	2%
Base (valid responses)	311	100%

Table 2: Profile of response – respondents*

	Number of respondents	% of valid responses
School community – Teachers	226	73%
School community – Parents/carers	33	11%
School community – Learner	19	6%
School community – Non teaching staff	5	2%
School community - Local Primary school	1	0%
College community - Teaching staff	16	5%
College community – Learner	3	1%
College community – Non teaching staff	4	1%
Other e.g., individual, organisation	38	12%

* Note this was a multiple response question, a small number of institutions submitted responses which had been prepared with input from a number of respondents groups. Consequently, the % of valid responses sums to more than 100%.

Base (valid responses): 311

Table 3: Profile of response – response to each question

	School community	College community	Other/blank	Total*
Question 1	227	15	33	275
Question 2	244	15	36	295
Question 3	253	15	36	304
Question 4	252	15	36	303
Question 5	251	15	35	301
Question 5a	185	11	27	223
Question 6	229	14	34	277
Question 7	236	13	35	284
Question 8	193	8	26	227
Question 9	161	6	28	195
Base (valid responses): 311				

Appendix B: School and College survey questionnaire

Q1. Background for Question

Subjects or Curricular Areas: In secondary schools for most learners this would involve progress in individual subjects, for some learners it would reflect progress in curricular areas; in colleges it would include progress in programmes of study.

Learning in Context: An interdisciplinary project-based approach where evidence is gathered on achievements between subjects and across knowledge, skills and competences in action.

A Personal Pathway: Here learners have opportunities to select aspects of their experiences that reflect their interests, the contributions they make to society and their career aspirations.

Question 1: Do the three areas described above offer learners the potential to gather and reflect a broader range of achievements important for their future progress? Is there anything you would add or delete?

Now, please look in detail at each of the three areas

Q2. Background for Subject Studies

In the Subject/Programme/Curriculum Area component of the award, learners would include the evidence of their particular areas of study.

Question 2: What are your views on the proposals for recognising achievements in subjects/curricular areas?

Q3. Background for Learning in Context

An interdisciplinary project-based approach where evidence is gathered on learners' achievements across knowledge, skills and competences in action. This part of the Scottish Diploma of Achievement offers learners opportunities to engage in activities that will allow them to demonstrate their abilities in using knowledge and skills in action.

Learners could undertake a project on a global issue, for example, climate change, social justice, or migration. For others, this might involve a local community task.

Learning in Context would allow learners to demonstrate a range of skills, eg, their ability to collaborate, to problem solve, to manage time and resources in an area

that would inspire them to learn and, in a context, be closer to many real-life challenges they will face beyond school.

Question 3: What are your views on the proposals for recognising achievements in knowledge and skills in action?

Q4. Background to Personal Pathway

The third part of the Scottish Diploma of Achievement is the Personal Pathway: Designed to offer learners opportunities to select aspects of their experiences to reflect their interests, the contributions they make to society and their future aspirations.

Each learner would include evidence achievements in a range of areas.

- Social, e.g., contribution to school or to wider communities or caring responsibilities.
- Cultural, e.g., volunteering, engagement in cultural activities like, music, art, drama, Gaelic culture, sport, wider culture
- Economic, e.g., part-time employment, careers including enterprise, voluntary work.

Learners would be encouraged to gather their own evidence to illustrate their learning and progression. This might be in the form of a report but equally it could be photographs, recordings, pieces of video or a written statement. All evidence, including statements of involvement in activities, might be supported by individuals they have engaged with to validate participation and contribution.

Question 4: What are your views on the proposals designed to recognise achievements in respect of personal learning?

Question 5. What are your views on the idea of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement for all learners in Scotland?

Question 5a. If you support the idea in question 5, what actions should be taken to make this approach work in practice? What alternative would you propose that would be consistent with the vision and principles identified in Phase One of the Review?

Question 6. What changes to existing practice, if any, would you recommend to support the development of a new qualifications and assessment system?
For example:

- Accountability - the ways information is gathered on the relative success of educational settings.
- Inspection
- Professional Learning
- Initial Teacher Education
- Professional Standards
- College and University Entrance
- Recruitment procedures for employers

Question 7. To promote parity of esteem across all qualifications, academic or technical and professional, should all qualifications at a particular SCQF level have the same name?

Question 8. Do you have any additional comments about the proposed approach to qualifications and assessment set out in this paper?

Question 9. Given we are now in the final phase of the Review we would be interested to receive any feedback on our approach to this important exercise.

Question 10. Please provide details of who has been involved in this response for example are you a group or an individual. Tick all that apply.

Please do not provide any personal information anywhere in this form including names or email addresses or other identifiers. If you have provided personal details in answering the questions above please go back and edit your answers to remove these.

- School community - Learner
- School community - Teachers
- School community - Non teaching staff
- School community - parents/carers
- School community - Local Primary school
- College community - Learner
- College community - Teaching staff
- College community - Non teaching staff

- Other e.g. I am an individual or a non school/college organisation
- Comments: Is there anything else we should know about your response. For example, you may wish to tell us how many people were involved in your group survey response. [NB – this option was added part-way through the consultation period to aid clarity]

Before submitting a response you may also wish to read and be aware of the Scottish Government's privacy policy. This privacy notice tells you what to expect Scottish Government to do with your personal information should you share it with us.

To note you should copy and paste this link into a new browser page to avoid navigating out of the survey and losing your responses.

[The Scottish Government's privacy policy](#)

Appendix C: Technical appendix

Method

1. The survey data was collected by online survey designed and scripted by the Scottish Government and hosted on Smart Survey. CCG responses were collected by the Independent Review Group, established for this purpose.
2. The Review survey was sent to schools and colleges in Scotland.
3. 331 valid survey responses were received via Smart Survey, of which 311 were valid (that is contained data). A further 34 responses from schools and colleges were submitted directly to Scottish Government via email.
4. The Review consultation was issued on 3 March 2023. This report contains responses received until 14 April 2023. A supplementary report containing responses received between 15 April and 2 May 2023 will be produced under separate cover.
5. Respondents to internet self-completion surveys and consultations are self-selecting and complete the survey without the assistance of a trained interviewer.
6. The Independent Review Group ran a series of allied discussion groups with the Consultative Community Groups (CCGs). These covered a broad range of stakeholder groups including learners, teachers, parents/carers, policy makers and users of qualifications. In total, detailed responses were received from 19 CCGs and allied discussion groups, representing the views of over 400 people.
7. All research projects undertaken by Progressive comply fully with the requirements of ISO 20252, the GDPR and the MRS Code of Conduct.

Data processing and analysis

8. Raw data was imported into Progressive's SNAP analysis software package. Data that could not be automatically input was entered manually. Responses were checked for completeness and sense.
9. Responses to open-ended questions were spell and sense checked.
10. A coding framework was developed to support the analysis of responses and reviewed by the executive team. Responses were coded by Progressive's experienced team of coders. Non-standard and CCG responses were analysed separately.



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