Education Reform

Consultation on Behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government

September 2021

EDUCATION REFORM - CONSULTATION ON BEHALF OF PROFESSOR KEN MUIR - ADVISOR TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

This consultation is hosted on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland, in his role as independent advisor to the Scottish Government on the replacement of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the reform of Education Scotland.

Foreword

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)[1] report of June 2021[2] notes that engagement lies at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence and that the voices of young people, parents, teachers, lecturers and leaders, as well as other stakeholders, should be at the centre of education policy development. Therefore, this consultation is an open invitation for all who have an interest in Scottish education to engage in helping set the direction of travel for the future of Scottish education. It seeks your views and ideas on how we can build on the strengths we have developed in Scottish education and address some of the recommendations and questions raised in both the June OECD report and the August OECD report on student assessment[3].

Both OECD reports cover wide areas of Scottish education and impact on the work of many practitioners and stakeholders in many contexts. This consultation is **not** an attempt to survey all of the areas covered by the two OECD reports. Its main focus is on the ownership of Curriculum for Excellence; how we address the issues around roles and responsibilities for curriculum and assessment; and how we address the "misalignment" between the Broad General Education[4] and the Senior Phase[5] identified by the OECD. It also gives you the opportunity to make suggestions from your particular perspective on the changes you think are necessary to enhance the experiences and outcomes of current and future learners.

Any transition to introducing change needs to ensure a continuation of high-quality education for all learners while those changes are made. That is why this consultation invites your views on the risks relating to any change and the implications of these changes on wider parts of the education system. Responses are invited from both individuals and organisations and I would very much encourage joint responses from groups of individuals who have come together to discuss this work.

Thank you for taking part in this consultation exercise. The views of all stakeholders are important so please try to complete as much of it as you can from the

---

[1] [Home page - OECD](#)
[2] [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#)
[3] [OECD iLibrary | Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective (oecd-ilibrary.org)](#)
[4] [Broad general education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)
[5] [Senior phase | Senior phase and beyond | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)

perspective you have, including taking the opportunity to respond to the open-ended questions that seek your ideas for improving outcomes for all learners.

Thank you,

Professor Ken Muir
University of the West of Scotland

Responding to this Consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by **26 November 2021**.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (http://consult.gov.scot). Access and respond to this consultation online at: https://consult.gov.scot/learning-directorate/independent-education-reform-review You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please send your response, including the completed Respondent information Form which includes the consultation questions and can be found in the supporting documents section, to: EducationReform@gov.scot or by post to:

Learning Directorate
Secretariat to Professor Muir
Area 2B North
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: https://www.gov.scot/privacy/

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at http://consult.gov.scot . If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help Professor Muir. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be published.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at EducationReform@gov.scot.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.
To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
https://www.gov.scot/privacy/

Are you responding as an individual, group or an organisation?

☐   Individual
☐   Group
☐   Organisation

If responding as an individual or group, which of the following best describes your role in the education system?

☐ Parent / Carer   ☐ Child / Young Person
☐ Teacher / Lecturer / Practitioner   ☐ Support Staff
☐ School / Centre Leader   ☐ National Agency Officer
☐ Local Authority / Regional Officer   ☐ Employer / Industry
☐ Other, please state:

If responding as an individual or group, which of the following best describes your sector?

☐ Early years   ☐ Primary
☐ Secondary   ☐ Tertiary (Further / Higher Education)

Full name or group name

Organisation name
(if applicable)

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response.

Please indicate your publishing preference:

☐   Publish response with name
☐   Publish response only (without name)
☐   Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, in the analysis report.

We may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

☐   Yes
☐   No

CONTEXT FOR THIS CONSULTATION

The OECD has published two reports recently on aspects of Scottish education. The first, *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*[6] was published in June 2021. This report recognises that Curriculum for Excellence offers an inspiring and widely supported philosophy of education. It acknowledges the hard work done over the years by many in Scottish education to turn the vision for Curriculum for Excellence[7] and the refreshed narrative[8] into meaningful learning for children and young people at all stages.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future highlights the need for a more structured and strategic approach to curriculum review and implementation in Scotland, noting in particular that the structure, learning practices and assessment approaches in the Senior Phase[9] need adapting to be consistent with Curriculum for Excellence's vision to allow for a smooth curriculum experience from 3 to 18 and beyond.

In its response to the OECD report *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*, the Scottish Government has taken the decision that the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) would be replaced and that the functions of Education Scotland would be reviewed with the removal of the Inspectorate from its remit.

The second OECD report, *Upper-Secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A Comparative Perspective*, was published in August 2021[10]. This report was written to complement the first OECD report and sets out a number of possible ways in which improvements could be made to the alignment between Curriculum for Excellence and assessment in the Senior Phase.

PURPOSE OF THIS CONSULTATION

The purpose of this consultation is to seek the views of stakeholders to inform recommendations relating to the future shape of Scotland's national education agencies.

The consultation asks wider questions relating to Scotland's education system which will help to inform these recommendations as well as providing an opportunity for specific feedback relating to the proposed changes to Scotland's national education agencies.

Beyond this consultation, there are a number of additional engagement opportunities that will allow you to contribute to all these areas in more detail. These are detailed on the Education Reform part of the Scottish Government website[11].

---

[6] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD
[7] The purpose of the curriculum | Curriculum for Excellence | Policy drivers | Policy for Scottish education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland
[8] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (scotlandscurriculum.scot)
[9] Senior phase | Senior phase and beyond | Scottish education system | Education Scotland
[10] OECD iLibrary | Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective (oecd-ilibrary.org)
[11] Schools: Education reform - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

As part of this consultation we will engage with children and young people to elicit their views on what they would like to see from Scottish education now and in the future.

The results of this consultation process will be used to inform the work of the Expert Panel and the Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group set up to support the Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government leading on this part of the reform exercise. This will conclude with an independent report by Professor Muir to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in early 2022.

This consultation is divided into the following four sections:

1. **Vision**
2. **Curriculum and Assessment**
3. **Roles and Responsibilities**
4. **Replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority and reforming Education Scotland**

We are interested in your comments and ideas so there is space left after each section for you to provide these. If you need more space, please use the box at the end of the questionnaire, indicating to which of the four sections your comments refer.

SECTION 1 - VISION

Two decades have passed since the original vision for Curriculum for Excellence was set out. In 2019, a revised narrative on Curriculum for Excellence was published which aimed to update the original vision[12]. Since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, there have been marked changes in educational research giving rise to new insights into children and young people's learning, pedagogy, and the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to progress as learners.

"Scotland's curriculum – Curriculum for Excellence – helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century."
Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (scotlandscurriculum.scot)

As an introduction to the questions which follow in this consultation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

1.1   The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

1.2   What do you think should be retained and/or changed?

___

[12] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (scotlandscurriculum.scot)

SECTION 2 - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The OECD reports *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*[13] and *Upper-Secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A Comparative Perspective*[14] make it clear that aligning curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation is essential to delivering on the commitments made in Curriculum for Excellence relating to assessment.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

2.1   Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

2.2   Please share what you believe currently contributes to a coherent progression.

2.3   Please share ideas you may have to improve learner progression across stages and sectors.

3.1   In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

---

[13] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD
[14] OECD iLibrary | Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective (oecd-ilibrary.org)

3.2   Please share ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance this in future.

[ ]

4.1   The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report[15].

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

4.2   Please share your views of the potential advantages of establishing such an Agency.

[ ]

4.3   Please share your views of the potential disadvantages of establishing such an Agency.

[ ]

5.1   The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications[16] play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

5.2   Please identify the main factors, if any, that support a broader range of SQA qualifications being included in the curriculum in secondary schools.

[ ]

---

[15] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD
[16] Explore our qualifications - SQA

5.3   Please share any ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance the role of a broader variety of qualifications in the curriculum in secondary schools.

```
[blank text box]
```

6.1   Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

6.2   Please share any comments you may have on the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessments, and what could be done to deliver improvements.

```
[blank text box]
```

7.   Please share any additional comments you have on curriculum and assessment.

```
[blank text box]
```

SECTION 3 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The rationale for reform of Scottish education is to ensure that learning communities get the best possible support to provide the highest quality of learning and teaching for our children and young people. The aim is to continue to reduce the attainment gap and reduce variability in outcomes achieved by young people in different parts of the country.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future[17] recognises the complexity in Scottish education and highlights duplication of functions between different groups. It is claimed that this reduces clarity and consistency for practitioners and points to the need for Scotland's system leaders and stakeholders to revise the current allocation of responsibility for Curriculum for Excellence, including responsibilities for its strategic direction, its reviews and updates, and the response to needs and/or requests for support with curriculum issues.

A key challenge in improving the transparency of responsibilities and accountability mechanisms surrounding Curriculum for Excellence is in ensuring that the functions of agencies are designed in a way that maximises support for achieving excellence and equity for all children and young people from the early level upwards.

Building on a commitment to shared ownership of Curriculum for Excellence, the report therefore points to the need for improved clarity on functions and simplification of guidance for all stakeholders in order that the system is more coherent and more easily understood by all, allowing a greater focus on learning and teaching.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

8.1   There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

8.2   Please indicate where you think the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence should lie.

---

[17] Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD

9.1   There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

9.2   Please share which aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers is working well.

| |
| |

9.3   Please indicate where you think greater clarity is needed in relation to the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs / requests for support with curriculum and assessment issues.

| |
| |

10.1   There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

10.2   Please share any comments you may have on support for leadership and professional learning.

| |
| |

11.1   There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

11.2   Please share any ideas you may have on how trust and decision making can be further improved.

```

```

12.1   Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity.

☐ *Strongly Agree*
☐ *Agree*
☐ *Neither Agree/Disagree*
☐ *Disagree*
☐ *Strongly Disagree*

12.2   Please give examples of how you would like to see scrutiny and evaluation being carried out in future.

```

```

13.   Please share any additional comments on roles and responsibilities in Scotland's education system.

```

```

SECTION 4 - REPLACING THE SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY AND REFORMING EDUCATION SCOTLAND

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced in June 2021 the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment while also taking forward reform of Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection or scrutiny from the agency. This section seeks views on how best to take forward key aspects of the Cabinet Secretary's decision including:

- **Removing Scrutiny (Inspection and review) from Education Scotland**
- **Further reform of Education Scotland**
- **Replacing SQA**
- **Considering the establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency**

While it is expected to take some time to establish new or revised national agencies, it is anticipated that they will have a key role in taking forward delivery of wider OECD recommendations. This would include embedding a refreshed vision for Curriculum for Excellence, defining indicators to understand progress across the four capacities, building curricular capacity, implementing new pedagogical and assessment practices, implementing approaches for internal assessment in determining qualifications, ensuring appropriate breadth and depth of learning through the Broad General Education[18] and in respect of the Senior Phase[19], embedding a structured and long-term approach to implementation, effective stakeholder engagement and coherent communications.

To assist you in answering these questions, information on the current roles and functions carried out by SQA and Education Scotland are provided within the supporting documents section at https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781802014327/documents/.

Removing Scrutiny (Inspection and review) from Education Scotland

External scrutiny (inspection and review) plays a fundamental role in the overall drive to continue to improve education in Scotland for all of our children, young people and adult learners. HM Inspectors carry out independent, external evaluation of standards, quality and improvement with a clear focus on impact and outcomes for learners. The scrutiny programme covers all sectors from early learning and childcare to adult learning, The evidence gathered through observing practice at first hand identifies what is working well in our education system, including examples of highly effective practice, areas which are showing improvement and areas where further development is needed.

---

[18] Broad general education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland
[19] Senior phase | Senior phase and beyond | Scottish education system | Education Scotland

14.   Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

   a) the approach this reform should take (for example what form should this agency take)
   b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example the development of a new national approach to inspection including alignment with other scrutiny functions)
   c) the risks associated with any reform (for example whether the independence of the inspectorate could be jeopardised by change)
   d) how any risks might be mitigated
   e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

Further Reform of Education Scotland

Beyond inspection Education Scotland is a broad organisation responsible for a range of important functions designed to support a number of parts of the Scottish Education system. These functions include directly supporting learning communities at local and regional levels, offering a wide range of professional learning and leadership development programmes and opportunities, Community Learning and Development (including the CLD Standards Council), supporting digital pedagogies and as the function of Registrar of Independent Schools.

15. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on how the functions currently housed in Education Scotland could be reformed.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

   a) the approach this reform should take (for example which functions should continue to sit within a reformed Education Scotland, and are there any functions which could be carried out elsewhere)
   b) the opportunities reform could present (for example should more prominence be given to aspects of Education Scotland's role)
   c) the risks associated with any reform (for example disruption of service to education establishments and settings)
   d) how any risks might be mitigated
   e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

Replacing SQA

SQA has two main roles: accreditation and awarding qualifications.

> **SQA Accreditation** accredits qualifications other than degrees and approves and quality assures awarding bodies that plan to enter people for these qualifications.

> **SQA Awarding Body** devises and develops national and vocational qualifications across schools, colleges, training providers and employers; sets standards and maintains such qualifications; validates qualifications (makes sure they are well written and meet the needs of learners and practitioners); reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date; arranges for, assists in, and carries out, the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications; quality-assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications; and issues certificates to candidates.

Within both of these roles, SQA offers a range of services for businesses and training providers, ranging from course and centre approval through customised awards, to endorsement, credit rating and licensing services.

16. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

a) the approach this reform should take (for example could a function be carried out elsewhere)
b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example should more prominence be given to an aspect of SQA's role)
c) the risks associated with any reform (for example loss of income, confusion as to system of awards in Scotland)
d) how any risks might be mitigated
e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

[ ]

Considering the Establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency

The establishment of new Agency has the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the education sector. It will be important that the remit, purpose, governance and culture of the new agency match the aspirations of the system it will be designed to serve. We are therefore interested in the role of the new agency, its relationship with other parts of the system including the Scottish Ministers and how we will know it has been successful.

17. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

a) the approach this reform should take (for example are there alternative models for this reform?)
b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example what should the role of the new agency be?)
c) the risks associated with any reform
d) how any risks might be mitigated
e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

[ ]

If you have any additional comments and suggestions relating to this consultation, please send them to EducationReform@gov.scot

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

This publication is available at **www.gov.scot**

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

w w w . g o v . s c o t