

Freedom of Information Request

Reference: 202000089956

List of Enclosures

Enclosure No	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
1	Young People in Scotland Survey - Senior Phase Report	17/03/2020	Information intended for publication by 15 December 2020	27 (1)(i)
2	Extract from Deputy First Ministers Education and Skills Committee Briefing	27/11/2019		
3	SPICE Briefing Paper	25/11/2019		
4	Analysis of Mark Priestley Analysis	12/11/2019		
5	Analysis of Professor Jim Scott's paper on attainment	6/11/2019		
6	Headteacher Survey Publication Briefing	24/09/2019		
7	Senior Phase: Headteacher	25/09/2019	Publicly Available information but have included link	25(1)

	Survey results report which includes subject choice.		https://www.gov.scot/publications/senior-phase-headteacher-survey/	
8	Publication of Headteacher Survey Minute to Deputy First Minister	12/09/2019	Personal data	38(1)(b)

ENCLOSURE 1 YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND SURVEY

[Redact 25(1)]

ENCLOSURE 2. EXTRACT FROM DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER BRIEFING FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE 27 NOVEMBER 2019.

ANNEX B: SPICE BRIEFING PAPER – RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS & ISSUES RAISED

THEME 1: 2019 EXAM DIET

Whether there has been a policy focus on improving the highest level of qualification individuals leave school with. If so, whether there has been a trade-off in terms of the number of qualifications individuals are leaving school with.

- The focus should be on the whole experience, rather on the number of subjects, and on the qualifications achieved by the time a person leaves school – that is what matters for an apprenticeship, college, university place or employment and for their future lives.
- More young people are choosing to remain at school, with almost two thirds leaving in S6 (from 55.0% in 2009/10 to 62.7% in 2017/18).
- In 2017/18, for the first time ever, more than 30% of pupils achieved at least five passes at Higher or better – that is up from 22.2% in 2009/10.
- Under Curriculum for Excellence, there are no set notions about the number or types of qualifications taken at each stage of the senior phase.
- The guiding principle is that qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the senior phase.

- Therefore, as part of the current Senior Phase arrangements, it may well mean that young people take fewer qualifications – particularly at levels 3,4 and 5 - than they did under the old standard grade model. It will mean that the design of the senior phase will look different from school to school.
- A Senior Phase where young people study for fewer qualifications enables teachers to offer more time for high quality learning and teaching, and in depth learning. It also provides time for young people to follow courses and awards that help them develop skills and attributes in wider aspects such as employability, leadership and voluntary work.
- The scope for schools to decide what is best for their own learners is a key principle of CfE and of the empowering schools agenda. As the OECD made clear, curriculum reform has to come from schools rather than waiting for central direction.

CfE original intentions

- It was always considered that the introduction of curriculum for excellence might alter the pattern of the Senior Phase.
- From the outset we were clear, in the entitlements of CFE that the senior phase curriculum would:
 - comprise more than programmes which lead to qualifications;
 - have a continuing emphasis on health and wellbeing;
 - provide opportunities for personal achievement, service to others and practical experience of the world of work.
- These entitlements represented a clear and deliberate broadening of our focus to beyond exams and traditional qualifications.
- A Curriculum Review Programme Board was established (consisting of Scottish Executive officials, national bodies, teachers and head teachers) and this group published a “progress and proposals” report in 2006 which made clear that it expected there would be fundamental shifts in curriculum design:

“We wish to consider, for example, whether it would be desirable and possible for choices to take place over a more extended period across S1 to S3, rather than the S2 course choice model”

“By the end of S3, learners should have established a solid basis of learning on which they can build as they move into a framework of qualifications”

- A ‘what might change section’ made clear the following:

“In due course, changes needed in the S4 to S6 curriculum, to build upon the revised S1 to S3 base ... Scope to plan for S4 to 6 as a single stage with a great deal of opportunity for individual pathways”

- In 2011, the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board published a “Statement on the Senior Phase” which said:

“The Management Board welcomes the emerging picture of bespoke senior phase models. These show that some schools will plan for five or six subjects in S4 - viewing it as a way of facilitating deeper learning, making space for recognising wider achievements and providing scope for taking qualifications over differing timescales eg: two year Highers. Other schools may prefer to offer, for example, eight courses of study in S4 with the option of being presented for all eight in S4 or deferring several subjects in S4, knowing that further study in these subjects will continue in S5. Similarly, some pupils may defer presentation in a subject in S5 until S6.”

- In February 2013, Education Scotland published guidance on “Progression from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase”, which said:

“At present, most schools are implementing or maintaining approaches that enable young people to study between five and eight SQA qualifications in S4, usually alongside other important areas of learning. Some features of emerging models include:

- *in S4 and S5, delivering typically two-year programmes for young people to learn across two levels, such as National 5 and Higher, with S6 being a single year programme which includes a range of Advanced Highers or a Scottish Baccalaureate and which perhaps involves colleges;*
 - *developing a neighbourhood consortium or ‘campus’ approach where education authorities, schools and partners such as colleges have aligned provision and timetabling to maximise the range of achievement pathways with courses available to young people at all levels;*
 - *delivering S4-S6 as a single cohort within which young people can opt for a mixture of subjects and levels and learn in mixed-age groups – this can help provide a wider range of classes*
 - *providing six qualifications for all in S4, followed by flexible planning over the next two years with study for Higher and Advanced Higher; and*
 - *delivering a flexible combination of one- or two-year programmes.”*
- And this guidance was updated in May 2016 to say:
“During S4, learners may be studying for some qualifications which will result in presentation at the end of S4. They may equally continue studying over two years in some subjects until the end of S5 before being presented for a qualification. The same may apply across S5 and S6, with qualifications being taken over one or two years....With this in mind, schools should plan for young people to progress smoothly on to following anything between six and eight qualification courses from S4 onwards, with certification of each over a mix of one or two years, as appropriate to their individual needs.”

The reasons for the continued fall in the average number of National Qualifications and Skills for Work Qualifications per senior phase pupil since 2017.

Much of the recent debate appears to assume that more qualifications at levels 4 and 5 is necessarily better. It does not recognise that there is scope to provide the NQs in a different way designed to personalise learning for young people, e.g. by studying Nationals over S4 and S5, or Highers over S4 and S5, removing the need for a linear progression from National, to Highers to Advanced Highers.

Eileen Prior (Connect) said 1 May in evidence to Committee: “Of course, Scottish Qualifications Authority exams are not the only route for young people. **We are a bit fixed on it being about nationals, highers and advanced highers, but there are many other qualifications for young people.**

One of the conversations is surely about the range of opportunities for young people. **Something that exercises me is that many parents get very wound up about the number of nationals a young person can take**, although we know that the number of nationals that they accumulate will not have any impact if, for example, the young person wants to go to university. Therefore, that is not the right conversation for that young person, and we should focus on highers. I get a sense that we, and the system, are caught up in the rigidity of nationals, highers and advanced highers when the conversation should be a more flexible one about the range of opportunities that are available to all our young people.

We focus on the awards pupils achieve by the time they leave school

- More young people are choosing to remain at school, with almost two thirds leaving in S6 (from 55.0% in 2009/10 to 62.7% in 2017/18).
- In 2017/18, for the first time ever, more than 30% of pupils achieved at least five passes at Higher or better – that is up from 22.2% in 2009/10.

Performance at Level 6 - Higher – has improved

- How these things are counted has changed over the years so we cannot always make direct comparisons.
- When we took office, significantly less than half of pupils (41.6%) left school with a Higher (or equivalent) or better. Now almost two-thirds (62.2%) get at least that.
- And, where we can make direct comparison over recent years, we find those getting a Higher or better is up from 50.4% in 2009/10 to 62.2% in 2017/18.

Achievement at Level 5 – National 5 - is also up

- Again, direct comparisons cannot always be made with previous years due to changes to how things are counted.
- In 2006/7 the percentage of school leavers getting a level 5 qualification – such as Nationals - or better was 71.1%. In 2017/18, it was 85.9%.
- And looking at the last few years, where we can make direct comparisons, we find an increase of almost 9 percentage points from 77.1% in 2009/10.

All of this is before we consider the wider range of vocational provision

- The number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at Level 5 and above has increased from 7.3% in 2013/14 to 14.8% in 2017/18.
- Over 54,000 skills-based qualifications have been achieved this year (2019), more than double the figure attained in 2012 (from 24,849 to 54,406).

Now that Insight data is available some analysis can be carried out on the actual achievements of young people. At national level, the following tables show the pattern for performance for SCQF level 5 and SCQF level 6:

SCQF level 5 by the end of S5 (based on S4) National	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 or more awards	85.3%	85.8%	86.5%	86.2%
2 or more awards	78.1%	79.0%	79.9%	79.8%
3 or more awards	71.5%	72.7%	73.8%	73.9%
4 or more awards	64.5%	65.7%	67.0%	67.4%
5 or more awards	55.6%	57.2%	58.6%	59.6%

SCQF level 6 by the end of S5 (based on S4) National	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 or more awards	59.1%	59.7%	60.4%	61.6%
2 or more awards	48.1%	48.5%	49.5%	51.2%
3 or more awards	38.8%	39.5%	40.4%	42.5%
4 or more awards	29.2%	30.1%	30.7%	33.2%
5 or more awards	18.8%	19.4%	20.1%	22.1%

This data includes all awards at these levels and would include other qualifications such as, National Progression Awards.

To date, what work has been done by the Scottish Government or its agencies to ascertain the extent to which entries to shorter vocational courses may be replacing longer traditional subjects in senior phase.

- To support us in better understanding the impact of the DYW programme, in addition to the KPIs, we have commenced a programme-wide evaluation. The evaluation will add value to the KPIs by using qualitative and mixed methods evidence to help us consider nuanced longer term outcomes, such as attitude and behaviour changes towards parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications.
- Work is also being progressed to understand the extent to which there are differences in attainment and destinations between ‘middle cohort’ young people who undertake a senior phase vocational pathway (SPVP), and ‘middle cohort’ young people who do not undertake a SPVP. This will help facilitate analysis and policy work to ensure that the DYW offer is being taken up by and is useful for all those young people who stand to benefit, especially those for whom the absence of a SPVP may lead to non-participation.

What might explain the downward trends in pass rates since 2016 at National 4, Higher, Advanced Higher and Skills for Work qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6. What are the Scottish Government's policy responses to address this.

As always, there are issues we need to understand further in some qualifications.

- Annual fluctuations in the pass rate for qualifications are evidence of a robust qualifications and awarding system that maintains the highest standards.
- If the exam pass rate only ever went up, people would rightly question the credibility of our system.
- SQA publish Course Reports online for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher annually, these provide information on where improvements could be focused.
- Course reports are a valuable resource for teachers and lecturers to prepare candidates for future assessment.
- Education Scotland and local authorities will then explore what further subject-specific support can be provided nationally, through Regional Improvement Collaboratives and by Education Scotland's regional teams.

THEME 3: SUBJECT CHOICES REPORT

Narrowing of choice/ Equity of access to subjects

- The Committee itself acknowledged that "there is, depending on availability, a wider range of subjects and alternative pathways for pupils to choose from than existed before"
- The Senior Phase is a three year experience - what matters is the qualifications and awards that pupils leave school with
- The guiding principle is that qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the senior phase.

- Under the current arrangements, schools now have the freedom and flexibility to design a bespoke three year senior phase of a range of courses and qualifications tailored to meet the needs of the young people at the school.
- This inevitably leads to variation and it is for schools to make decisions on the best model for their young people.
- In the recent headteacher survey on the senior phase curriculum 97% of headteachers said that they are flexible in their approach and offer individualised timetables where possible.

The need for further research and an independent review of the Senior Phase

- An independent review of the Senior Phase has been commissioned.
- The review will explore how Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented for young people in S4-S6 across the country. It will be principally focused on understanding the experiences learners as well as practitioners, parents and carers.
- To ensure the review is independent and robust we have asked the OECD to lead the review.
- We will ensure that the Scottish Parliament and the education sector is closely involved in the process. I have written to the Committee seeking their views on this.
- The review will start in December, with an interim report expected in June 2020 and a final report expected in August 2020.

Multi-level teaching

- Running bi-level or multi-level course classes is one approach many schools have used for many years to increase the amount of choice available to their pupils.
- There will be varying levels of prior attainment in any class and Education Scotland has yet to see any firm evidence from inspections of educational disadvantage due to multilevel teaching.
- In line with the unanimous decision of the Parliament on 1 May 2019, we will be conducting an independent review of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. The review will provide an opportunity to look at the impact of different approaches to learning and teaching, including bi-level and multi-level teaching.

Status of N4 qualifications

- National 4 is a key part of the range of awards and qualifications on offer within the Senior Phase and is fully accredited.
- It is an important qualification in its own right and a credible pathway through the senior phase, and should not be seen as a consolation prize.
- It is not intended to be seen simply as a stepping stone to National 5.
- National 4 is also a gateway to vocational learning - and a different range of qualifications - that is better pathway for some learners.
- Those taking National 4 can use it to move into college or training and other qualifications at SCQF Levels 5 and beyond.
- This can include National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeships.
- Teachers and schools, in partnership with young people and parents/carers, are best placed to decide the most appropriate path for a young person.
- There remain strong educational reasons for having no exam at National 4:
- The Curriculum and Assessment Board, which represents all parts of our education system, carried out a review and found that there was no consensus for having an exam at National 4.
- National 4 is internally assessed, this is a valid assessment method used widely across the education sector, including within Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, and within Colleges and Universities.

ANNEX L: JIM SCOTT ANALYSIS OF ATTAINMENT

Professor Scott's paper covers a wide range of topics related to CfE, including its original design principles, how it is delivered in practice, how it has affected pupil attainment and subject choice (including performance in specific subjects), SG's approach to evaluation, and how schools are communicating with parents on their own circumstances. This note focuses on the key issues from his analysis which have formed part of the current debate, and not on *all* the issues raised in his paper.

Issue raised: The ‘no qualification’ rate has increased.

- “The ‘no qualification’ rate has increased from 1.5% in 2012/13 - the year before CfE (i.e. new National Qualifications began to be rolled out) - to 2.0% in 2016/7 to 2.2% in 2017/8.”
- “The ‘no qualification rate’ improved in 26 out of 32 local authority areas prior to CfE's introduction, but has since declined in 21 areas. It has more than doubled in 11 areas, including three where it has trebled and one (Dundee) where it has quadrupled.”

Our response:

- This analysis is correct although the rate had been higher in the past - in 2009/10 2.8% of school leavers left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better.
- In this context, the proportion of pupils leaving with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better has been relatively stable between 2014/15 and 2017/18. However it did increase in 2013/14 having fallen prior to this.
- At LA level, then assuming 2009/10 as a baseline, we can largely replicate his figures. Between 2009/10 and 2012/13 the proportion of school leavers who left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better decreased (improved) in 25 local authorities and that between 2012/13 and 2017/18 this proportion increased (declined) in 20 local authorities. Our figures show that the proportion doubled in 10 local authorities and, as stated, more than quadrupled in Dundee City. [see *Tables at end of this document*]
- This data, as with much of Professor Scott’s analysis, focuses solely on National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 and above. The majority of these leavers did achieve a course award or unit assessment – around a fifth left with a course award, for example a National 2, an Employability Award or a Modern Languages for Life and Work Award. A further two-fifths achieved one or more unit assessments:
 - Around 17% of this group achieved a full award of some kind (188 school leavers)
 - a further 43% achieved a Unit or Units as part of a qualification (471 school leavers)
 - 40% did not achieve any awards/units (433 school leavers)

Issue raised: Widening attainment gap in ‘no qualifications’ data.

- “Attainment gap in ‘no qualifications’ data has widened’ - a 46% increase in the proportion of pupils at the lower end of the academic scale who are leaving with no qualifications.”

Our response:

- The report draws on the ‘no qualifications’ measure to make broader substantive conclusions about the poverty-related attainment gap. This differs from the Scottish Government’s definition and measurement of the gap, which draws on a broader set of data.
- While the proportion of leavers with no qualifications is an indicator of lower performance, it is not an indicator of the attainment gap as it makes no reference to the deprivation background of these leavers.
- We use a far broader set indicators, set out within the NIF, that were chosen following extensive consultation with education stakeholders and others, these include:
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better has reduced from 11.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 6.1 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 20.3 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009/10 to 37.4 percentage points in 2017/18. This is a record low.
 - Although not a key NIF measure, it does show that the gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive follow-up destination has reduced from 20.2 percentage points in 2009/10 to 8.6 percentage points in 2017/18.

Issue raised: Lack of evaluation of Curriculum for Excellence

- There has been a ‘lack of in-depth evaluation of CfE’.

Our response:

- The report is correct in stating that there has not been a full evaluation research study of CfE.
- We commissioned wide-ranging independent reviews by the OECD in both 2007 and in 2015.
- There has been a succession of Education Scotland themed inspection reports.
- More recently (in 2018) Scottish Government commissioned an independent survey of head-teachers on the implementation of the senior phase. This has laid the basis for an OECD-led review of the senior phase (which will cover many of the issues raised in Professor Scott’s report).
- CfE is not a curriculum that is lacking in scrutiny or challenge.

Issue raised: Reduced increase in the number of alternative qualifications offered.

- “In the pre-CfE period, from 2011 to 2013, the total number of “alternative” qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 267%, from 9,636 to 25,704, an increase of 16,068 qualifications per annum by 2013. In the CfE era from 2013 to 2019, the total number of ‘alternative’ qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 60%, with 15,384 extra qualifications per annum by 2019. Given that this period is three times as long as the pre-CfE period analysed, this is clearly a much smaller rate of rise.”
- The increase in number of alternative qualifications is not large enough to compensate for reduction in what Liz Smith called 'core subjects'.

Our response:

- The “pre CfE” data increased from a much lower base.
- The overall increase in wider attainment and achievement awards is a testament to the success of our Developing the Young Workforce reforms and the breadth of the renewed “offer” across CfE.
- Provision of vocational qualifications and awards in the senior phase is growing, therefore increasing choice for young people
- There are more ways for our young people to progress, whether through National Qualifications or through other recognised, accredited qualifications
- This includes a significant expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6, allowing for further progression
- There has been an increase in the uptake of vocational qualifications available to those in the senior phase year on year and we are committed to continuing this.
- There has been a year on year increase in the number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF 5 and above. From 7.3% in 2013/14 to 9% in 2014/15, 10.7% in 2015/16, 12.8% in 2016/17 and 14.8% in 2017/18 .
- Over 54,000 skills-based qualifications were achieved in 2019, more than double the figure attained in 2012 (24,849).

Issue raised: Decline in attainment at SCQF level 3-5.

- “A highly significant decline of 18.0% in overall attainment took place from 2012-13 to 2013-14, the first S4 year of CfE and nNQs.”
- “SCQF 3 passes declined from 60,347 in 2013 to 16,958 in 2019, a decline of 71.9% (and this incorporates a small element of recovery in 2018 and 2019)”
- “SCQF 4 passes declined from 170,378 to 92,845, a decline of 45.5%”
- “SCQF 5 passes declined from 272,496 to 225,594, a decline of 17.2% over the period”

Our response:

- Looking at yearly snapshots does not capture the package of achievements and awards achieved by a young person at the end of their Senior Phase. It is what young people achieve by the time they leave school that matters.
- The shift towards new and alternative options will play some role in driving this shift in data.
- These points will be explored in full as part of the Senior Phase Review.

Issue raised: Attainment at SCQF level 6.

- “There is a 4-year negative trend in enrolments and attainment at Higher Grade (coinciding with the introduction of CfE courses)”.
- “Significant growth of Higher enrolments (+7.2%) and attainment (+7.5%) in the 4 pre-CfE years, set against a slowly declining population, has been replaced by a significant decline in the 4 post-2015 CfE years, with Higher enrolment (-6.0%) and attainment (-9.4%), against a stable population of S5 learner numbers.”
- “The post-NQ decline in attainment from 2015 to 2019 has clearly outstripped the decline in enrolments i.e. not all of the decline in attainment is explained by learners eschewing Highers for ‘alternatives’ or failing to reach an S4 standard sufficient to give them entry to Higher - more enrollees are failing in the new CfE Higher system.”

Our response:

- It is correct that we have seen a drop in the number of entries, passes and the pass rate at Higher (see table below from published SQA sources).

SQA Higher (SCQF Level 6) Performance (Pre-Review)

Entries

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	107,295	197,774	194,813	191,951	185,914
Previous Higher	175,492	178,838	181,568	183,314	191,850	92,555	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	175,492	178,838	181,568	183,314	191,850	199,850	197,774	194,813	191,951	185,914

Passes

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	85,019	152,701	150,010	147,419	138,972
Previous Higher	130,978	134,458	139,698	141,873	147,899	70,981	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	130,978	134,458	139,698	141,873	147,899	156,000	152,701	150,010	147,419	138,972

Pass Rate

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	79.2%	77.2%	77.0%	76.8%	74.8%
Previous Higher	74.6%	75.2%	76.9%	77.4%	77.1%	76.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	74.6%	75.2%	76.9%	77.4%	77.1%	78.1%	77.2%	77.0%	76.8%	74.8%

- In a system where the standard remains consistent, we can expect year on year fluctuations in performance subject-by-subject.
- The Deputy First Minister has repeatedly acknowledged the overall fall in this year's Higher pass rate (down 2 percentage points), particularly in relation to English (down 2.7 percentage points) and Mathematics (down 2.1 percentage points) but has also stressed that this was a strong set of exam results, with three-quarters of candidates attaining a pass at Higher grades A-C. Over a quarter of candidates in 2019 achieved a grade A at Higher (28.3% in 2019 compared to 28.4% in 2018).
- The proportion of school leavers who achieve SCQF Level 5 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18:
 - In 2009/10, 77.1% of school leavers achieved 1 pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 85.9%.
 - The proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

Percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 5, 2009/10 to 2017/18

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	85.9	78.8	72.1	65.2	57.4	48.9	38.4
2016/17	86.1	78.8	72.00	64.6	56.7	48	37.6
2015/16	85.6	78.1	71.4	64.1	56	47.2	37.1
2014/15	85.2	77.4	70.5	63.6	56.2	48.5	40.2
2013/14	84.3	76.3	69.6	63.3	56.5	48.9	40.9
2012/13	82.7	74.1	67.5	61.3	54.6	47.2	39.2
2011/12	81.6	73.1	66.7	61	54.6	47.5	39.8
2010/11	79.2	70.2	63.6	57.6	51.3	44.5	37
2009/10	77.1	67.9	61.5	55.8	49.9	43.4	36.2

- The proportion of school leavers who achieved SCQF Level 6 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18:
 - In 2009/10, 50.4% of school leavers achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF level 6 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 62.2%.
 - The proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

Percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 6 or better, 2009/10 to 2017/18

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	62.2	52.4	44.9	37.9	30.4	19.8	9.6
2016/17	61.2	51.6	44.2	37.3	29.9	19.4	9.3
2015/16	61.7	51.8	44.3	37.2	29.7	19	9.1
2014/15	60.2	50.1	42.6	35.7	28.6	18.4	8.5
2013/14	58.1	48.6	41.5	35.1	28.1	17.9	8.3
2012/13	55.8	46.5	39.2	32.8	25.9	16.1	6.8
2011/12	55.8	46.8	39.7	33.4	26.2	16.4	7
2010/11	52.3	43.5	36.7	30.3	23.3	13.7	5.5
2009/10	50.4	42	35.5	29.4	22.2	12.6	4.9

Issue raised: Attainment at SCQF level 7 (Advanced Higher)

- “Over the whole period from 2014 to 2019, attainment rose by 1.9%, clearly outstripping the 9% population decline [of the S6 pupil cohort] in the period”

Our response:

- The rise in attainment between 2006 and 2014 and the increase in attainment from 2014 to 2019, despite a reduction in the S6 learner population, is welcomed.
- In 2014, the average number of Advanced Higher entries by S6 pupils was 0.7. This has increased to 0.8, in 2019.

Issue raised: Scottish Baccalaureate

- “Although there has been some recovery of enrolments since 2015, the number of learners attaining a Baccalaureate is now at a second low point, having declined from a peak of 165 to the present 109”.

Our response:

- The Scottish Baccalaureate was never intended to be a mass-market qualification and is offered by a relatively small number (50) of centres who enter on average four students each year.
- The vast majority of these centres are mainstream schools, with a small number of independent schools entering learners for the Science and Languages Scottish Baccalaureate.
- The Scottish Baccalaureate, particularly the interdisciplinary project (IDP) which develops and recognises skills for learning, work and life, supports both the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) skills for the future (also referred to as meta skills).

Learning Directorate**6 November 2019**

Percentage of school leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better, 2009/10 to 2017/18

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	2.8	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2

Percentage of school leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better, by local authority, 2009/10 to 2017/18

Local Authority	Percentage											2009/10 to 2012/13		2012/13 to 2017/18	
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Increase /Decrease	percentage point chan	Increase /Decrease	percentage point chan		
Aberdeen City	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.9	2.3	3.1	2.4	2.3	3.2	Increase	0.5	Increase	0.3		
Aberdeenshire	1.6	1.3	1.7	1.1	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.4	2.3	Decrease	-0.5	Increase	1.2		
Angus	3.0	1.6	2.0	0.9	2.1	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.9	Decrease	-2.1	Increase	2.0		
Argyll & Bute	2.3	1.7	1.5	1.6	2.0	3.7	3.0	*	2.4	Decrease	-0.7	Increase	0.8		
Clackmannanshire	4.4	4.1	4.3	2.5	3.9	4.1	2.2	3.4	3.6	Decrease	-1.9	Increase	1.1		
Dumfries & Galloway	1.8	1.2	0.6	1.0	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.8	2.1	Decrease	-0.8	Increase	1.1		
Dundee City	3.8	1.8	0.8	1.1	2.0	3.5	3.3	4.5	4.5	Decrease	-2.7	Increase	3.4		
East Ayrshire	4.2	3.6	2.7	1.8	1.9	3.1	2.8	2.6	3.0	Decrease	-2.4	Increase	1.2		
East Dunbartonshire	1.0	*	*	*	*	0.5	*	0.5	*	*	*	*	*		
East Lothian	2.2	2.3	0.7	1.4	2.2	1.9	1.8	2.2	2.9	Decrease	-0.8	Increase	1.5		
East Renfrewshire	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.9	0.5	1.0	0.7	Decrease	-0.5	Increase	0.0		
Edinburgh, City of	3.2	2.1	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.3	1.5	Decrease	-1.7	Decrease	0.0		
Falkirk	1.8	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.5	2.5	0.8	0.9	0.5	Decrease	-0.8	Decrease	-0.5		
Fife	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.2	1.8	3.1	3.5	2.6	2.8	Decrease	-1.1	Increase	0.6		
Glasgow City	6.3	4.9	3.7	2.8	2.4	3.1	2.5	2.7	2.8	Decrease	-3.5	Decrease	0.0		
Highland	2.8	2.9	2.4	1.6	1.5	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	Decrease	-1.2	Increase	1.4		
Inverclyde	1.6	2.1	0.9	*	0.7	*	*	1.1	1.0	*	*	*	*		
Midlothian	1.1	1.8	0.9	*	0.8	1.1	*	0.8	0.8	*	*	*	*		
Moray	2.6	2.2	2.2	1.8	1.4	2.5	2.1	3.0	3.7	Decrease	-0.8	Increase	1.9		
Na h-Eileanan Siar	2.2	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		
North Ayrshire	1.7	1.2	*	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.7	1.4	1.1	Decrease	-1.0	Increase	0.4		
North Lanarkshire	2.6	2.4	1.9	1.1	1.6	2.3	2.5	2.6	3.5	Decrease	-1.5	Increase	2.4		
Orkney Islands	*	2.4	*	*	*	*	2.8	*	3.1	*	*	*	*		
Perth & Kinross	1.6	1.0	0.5	0.9	1.6	1.0	2.5	2.4	1.9	Decrease	-0.7	Increase	1.0		
Renfrewshire	2.9	2.5	3.1	2.1	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.6	1.7	Decrease	-0.8	Decrease	-0.4		
Scottish Borders	2.3	1.5	0.9	0.8	1.5	1.0	1.5	2.1	2.3	Decrease	-1.5	Increase	1.5		
Shetland Islands	*	*	*	*	2.8	*	*	2.2	*	*	*	*	*		
South Ayrshire	1.8	1.3	0.4	1.1	0.6	0.8	1.2	0.5	0.5	Decrease	-0.7	Decrease	-0.6		
South Lanarkshire	3.2	2.8	2.0	2.3	2.8	2.4	2.2	2.2	2.1	Decrease	-0.9	Decrease	-0.2		
Stirling	2.9	2.4	1.4	0.8	0.7	1.6	0.8	1.1	1.4	Decrease	-2.1	Increase	0.6		
West Dunbartonshire	2.4	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.8	2.4	Decrease	-0.9	Increase	0.9		
West Lothian	1.8	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.9	1.0	Decrease	-1.3	Increase	0.5		
Scotland	2.8	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2	Decrease	-1.3	Increase	0.7		

25	6
1	20

Notes:

Scotland total includes grant-maintained schools.

* suppression due to small number (pupils with 5 or fewer pupils)

Professor Jim Scott “Issue by Issue” Analysis and Rebuttal

1. CURRICULUM POLICY AIMS AND RATIONALE

Statement: “attainment remains important but appears to have been increasingly displaced by equity”...the “equity then attainment agenda”.

Response:

The Scottish Government does not recognize this agenda. It is not an “either/or” question. Our policy is to support excellence in attainment for all and a narrowing of the poverty-related attainment gap.

Statement: There is a “lack of an overt educational rationale – as opposed to an unsubstantiated statement of “entitlement’ (e.g. Scottish Government, 2008, p.4) - for the 3-year BGE”

Response:

The published documents on the Curriculum for Excellence show a clear reasoning behind both the 3 year BGE in secondary and the three-year senior phase.

The purpose of the Broad General Education is to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence: Successful learners; Confident individuals; Responsible citizens; Effective contributors. These are not simply phrases – they are concepts designed to provide the breadth and depth of education to develop flexible and adaptable young people with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive now and in the future.

The senior phase is designed as a 3 year experience in order to offer greater personalisation and choice for learners. There are no pre-conceived notions about which qualifications and awards are taken at which stage of the senior phase.

2. BREADTH IN THE CURRICULUM

Statement: The importance of learners attaining qualifications across a broad range of curricular areas appears...to have almost disappeared from governmental discourse”.

Response:

The breadth of experience and a broad curriculum “offer” remains a key element in Education Scotland material, reinforced via inspection.

The recently published Refreshed Curriculum Narrative reinforces the breadth of the experiences and outcomes which were a feature within the original “Building the Curriculum” documentation.

3. SENIOR PHASE POLICY AND PRACTICE

Statement: The “focus [by Scot Gov / Ed Scot] on attainment of qualifications at the end of every young person’s school career apparently eschews the careful construction of the HMle-recommended (HMle, 2009, p.4) pathway of achievement and attainment, leading to final success.”

Response:

We eschew a narrow focus on subject choice at S4 – a focus which was prevalent in some of the recent discussion at the Education and Skills Committee and in much of the media analysis.

We do not “eschew” careful construction of a pathway of achievement and attainment throughout the BGE and Senior Phase.

Statement: One of several (presumably) unintended consequences of this introduction of a three-year BGE was the creation of a third “two-term dash” to qualifications, this time for S4 learners

Response:

The two-term dash may be a reality in a number of schools but it is not inevitable and it is not the reality in many other schools.

Clearly, there should be suitable preparation for young people in the Broad Education and S3 in particular should be an effective transition into the senior phase.

There is flexibility built into this framework and our improvement and support activity is focused on this issue.

4. “VOCATIONAL” OR “ALTERNATIVE” OFFER IN THE SENIOR PHASE

Statement:

- During 2018-19, only 47 secondary schools (13% of the 357 state secondary schools) indicated that they offered one or more “alternative” courses in their S3 curricular structure, with significantly fewer indicating similar provision in S2 or S1 (Ref 17).
- Almost all schools appear to make such vocational and other non-traditional provision in S4-6 within the course choice documentation, although to significantly varying extents.
- Evidence of attainment or achievement in the related college-based or employer-based courses provided by a majority of schools was also evident in

only a small minority of schools' publications, either in the S4-6 curriculum or the S5-6 curriculum

Response:

- This analysis draws on the curriculum “offer” information available via School websites and handbooks.
- There has been a sustained increase in the number of skills-based qualifications, with 54,406 awards achieved in 2018/19, more than double the figure attained in 2012 and a rise of over 4,000 awards on 2017/18.
- 5,202 senior phase pupils were enrolled in college courses in 2017/18, compared with 4,510 in 2016/17, 3,014 in 2015/16, 2,393 in 14/15 and 2,101 in 2013/14 – a rise of nearly 60% since 2013.
- Senior phase vocational pathways are operating in all local authorities (including within the land based provision of SRUC). The type of pathway varies across regions with some delivering HN or equivalent activity, and others focussing on Skills for Work, National Progression Awards, National Certificates and SVQs.
- Foundation Apprenticeships are now available in all local authorities with an increasing number of frameworks.
- There has been an increase in the number of young people starting Foundation Apprenticeships. In 2018, over 1,500 young people were enrolled on a Foundation Apprenticeship, an increase from 1,245 in 2017, 346 in 2016, 269 in 2015 and 63 in 2014, which was the baseline figure .
- This year over 5000 places were available. Foundation Apprenticeships are the same level as a Higher at SCQF level 6 and recognised by colleges, universities and employers.

Statement: “In the pre-CfE period, from 2011 to 2013, the total number of “alternative” qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 267%, from 9,636 to 25,704, an increase of 16,068 qualifications *per annum* by 2013. In the CfE era from 2013 to 2019, the total number of ‘alternative’ qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 60%, with 15,384 extra qualifications *per annum* by 2019. Given that this period is three times as long as the pre-CfE period analysed, this is clearly a much smaller rate of rise.”

Response:

- The “pre CfE” data increased from a much lower base.
- The overall increase in wider attainment and achievement awards is a testament to the success of our Developing the Young Workforce reforms and the breadth of the renewed “offer” across CfE.
- Provision of vocational qualifications and awards in the senior phase is growing, therefore increasing choice for young people
- That means more ways for our young people to progress, whether through National Qualifications or through other recognised, accredited qualifications
- This includes a significant expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6, allowing for further progression
- There has been an increase in the uptake of vocational qualifications available to those in the senior phase year on year and we are committed to continuing this.

- There has been a year on year increase in the number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF 5 and above. From 7.3% in 2013/14 to 9% in 2014/15, 10.7% in 2015/16, 12.8% in 2016/17 and 14.8% in 2017/18 .

5. SCQF LEVEL 3 – 5 ATTAINMENT

Statement:

- **“A highly significant decline of 18.0% in overall attainment took place from 2012-13 to 2013-14, the first S4 year of CfE and nNQs.”**
- **“very significant decline in the first nNQ year of 2013-14 is of genuine concern”**
- **SCQF 3 passes declined from 60,347 in 2013 to 16,958 in 2019, a decline of 71.9% (and this incorporates a small element of recovery in 2018 and 2019)**
- **SCQF 4 passes declined from 170,378 to 92,845, a decline of 45.5%**
- **SCQF 5 passes declined from 272,496 to 225,594, a decline of 17.2% over the period”**

Response

- Looking at yearly snapshots does not capture the package of achievements and awards achieved by a young person at the end of their Senior Phase. It is what young people achieve by the time they leave school that matters.
- The shift towards new and alternative options will play some role in driving this shift in data.
- These points will be explored in full as part of the Senior Phase Review.

6. SCQF LEVEL 6 ATTAINMENT

Statement:

- **There is a 4-year negative trend in enrolments and attainment at Higher Grade (coinciding with the introduction of CfE courses)**
- **Significant growth of Higher enrolments (+7.2%) and attainment (+7.5%) in the 4 pre-CfE years, set against a slowly declining population, has been replaced by a significant decline in the 4 post-2015 CfE years, with Higher enrolment (-6.0%) and attainment (-9.4%), against a stable population of S5 learner numbers.**
- **The post-nNQ decline in attainment from 2015 to 2019 has clearly outstripped the decline in enrolments i.e. not all of the decline in attainment is explained by learners eschewing Highers for ‘alternatives’ or failing to reach an S4 standard**

sufficient to give them entry to Higher - more enrolees are failing in the new CfE Higher system.

Table 2a: Overall SCQF Level 6 (Higher) Attainment: 2010-11 to 2018-19

Session	S5 Pupil Population	Higher Enrolments	Higher Passes (Grades A-C)	Trends
2010-11	47,741	178,925	138,274	Growth/decline (per annum) Popn.: -ve (-368) Enrol.: +ve (+12,934) Pass: +ve (+10,410)
2011-12	47,625	181,699	143,289	
2012-13	47,809	182,730	144,749	
2013-14	47,373	191,859	148,684	
2014-15	45,911	199,869	156,731	Year of Overlap
2015-16	44,862	197,750	153,391	Growth/decline (per annum) Popn.: stable (?) [See Table 7] Enrol.: -ve (-11,836) Pass: -ve (-14,419)
2016-17	43,394	194,804	150,639	
2017-18	43,660	191,951	147,419	
2018-19	44, 800 – 45,000 [See Note.]	185,914	138,972	

Response:

- We have seen a drop in the number of entries and the pass rate at Higher. This is borne out within Professor Scott's analysis.
- In a system where the standard remains consistent, we can expect year on year fluctuations in performance subject-by-subject.
- I have made it clear that I am concerned about the drop in the overall Higher pass rate (down 2 percentage points) and in relation to English (down 2.7 percentage points) and Mathematics (down 2.1 percentage points) in particular.
- These points will be explored in full as part of the Senior Phase Review.
- **In addition it is helpful to look at the percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 5 or better of SCQF Level 6 or better (below).**

SCQF Level 5 or better

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	85.9	78.8	72.1	65.2	57.4	48.9	38.4
2016/17	86.1	78.8	72.0	64.6	56.7	48.0	37.6
2015/16	85.6	78.1	71.4	64.1	56.0	47.2	37.1
2014/15	85.2	77.4	70.5	63.6	56.2	48.5	40.2
2013/14	84.3	76.3	69.6	63.3	56.5	48.9	40.9
2012/13	82.7	74.1	67.5	61.3	54.6	47.2	39.2
2011/12	81.6	73.1	66.7	61.0	54.6	47.5	39.8
2010/11	79.2	70.2	63.6	57.6	51.3	44.5	37.0
2009/10	77.1	67.9	61.5	55.8	49.9	43.4	36.2

- The proportion of school leavers who achieve SCQF Level 5 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18.
- In 2009/10, 77.1% of school leavers achieved 1 pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 85.9%.
- Similarly, the proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

SCQF Level 6 or better

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	62.2	52.4	44.9	37.9	30.4	19.8	9.6
2016/17	61.2	51.6	44.2	37.3	29.9	19.4	9.3
2015/16	61.7	51.8	44.3	37.2	29.7	19.0	9.1
2014/15	60.2	50.1	42.6	35.7	28.6	18.4	8.5
2013/14	58.1	48.6	41.5	35.1	28.1	17.9	8.3
2012/13	55.8	46.5	39.2	32.8	25.9	16.1	6.8
2011/12	55.8	46.8	39.7	33.4	26.2	16.4	7.0
2010/11	52.3	43.5	36.7	30.3	23.3	13.7	5.5
2009/10	50.4	42.0	35.5	29.4	22.2	12.6	4.9

- The proportion of school leavers who achieved SCQF Level 6 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18.
- In 2009/10, 50.4% of school leavers achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF level 6 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 62.2%.
- Similarly the proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

7. LEVEL 6 (HIGHER): SUBJECT BY SUBJECT ANALYSIS

Statement:

- Against an approximate 10% decline in S5 pupil roll over the period from 2014-19, **Expressive Arts** subjects have had mixed experiences. Art & Design declined by

25%, Drama by 11% and Music by only 3% (a gain against the declining roll), but the smaller subjects of Photography (+20%) and Dance (+13%) have made some gains.

- Some **Languages** have declined significantly at Higher Level since 2014: French is down 17%, Gaelic (Learners) is down 39%, Gaidhlig is down 13%. Elsewhere, English and German have declined in line with the pupil roll (but it must be remembered that, prior to CfE, Higher enrolments and attainment rose significantly against any decline in the S5 pupil roll) and only two small languages (Chinese (+72%) and Italian (+24%)) and one larger growth subject, Spanish (+57%), have resisted (and almost certainly absorbed) some of the wider linguistic decline.

- **Health & Wellbeing** includes Care (-40%), Health and Food Technology (-7%) and Physical Education (P.E.) (+33%). Given the size of the P.E. enrolment and attainment, this group has clearly grown overall.

- Worryingly, **Mathematics** declined by 15% over the period. This coincides with the wider issue of STEM subject decline.

- **Sciences** have generally declined relative to the population decline: Biology is down 22% in 2014-19, although Human Biology has reclaimed much of this; Chemistry is down 13% and Physics is down 19%. The Social Studies have all declined: Modern Studies has only declined in line with the learner population but Geography has declined by 18% and history by 23%. Religious & Moral Education declined by 21%.

- **Technology** subjects have had mixed experiences since 2014. Computing has declined by 34% (and Information Systems has disappeared without replacement), Graphic **Communication** declined by 21%, Design changed names but held steady in terms of attainment and Technological Studies disappeared. The Business Education subjects have generally gained, particularly Administration & IT (+42%) and the Home Economics subjects have varied: Fashion & Textile attainment has grown (+19%) but Health & Food technology has declined (-7%) and Professional Cookery and Lifestyle & Consumer Technology have gone.

Response:

Sciences

- We saw a welcome increase in passes and entries at Higher level in the Sciences in 2019 compared to 2018. In 2019, the total entries to the Sciences were up by 2.6% compared to 2018, to 31,512 and passes were up by 1.4% compared to 2018, to 23,435
- The picture at National 5 level in the Sciences is also positive in 2019 compared to 2018 with passes and entries at this level broadly stable or increasing in the Sciences
- Scotland is a science and research nation and we already punch above our weight and enjoy a global reputation for our research and innovation.
- STEM education is a priority for this Government as evidenced by good progress on our ambitious STEM Education and Training Strategy.

- We are addressing the shortage of STEM secondary teachers, including through the successful STEM bursary scheme for career changers.
- Education Scotland has approved STEM professional learning grants in a £2 million programme that will benefit around 13,000 practitioners this year.

Technology

- We are committed to ensuring that all young people in Scotland have the digital skills to use or create digital solutions in learning, life and work and that are required to increase productivity and economic growth.
- Data and digital skills are an increasingly prominent feature of education in the early years, primary and secondary schools, and all of this is underpinned by our curriculum focus on numeracy and mathematics.
- We have updated the school curriculum guidance to introduce a clear expectation that young people learn the fundamentals of computing science and digital skills from the earliest years of education.

Modern Languages

- In 2014, the total number of passes in modern languages at Higher level was 6,441. In 2019 it was 6,740, an increase of 4.6%
- The relatively high pass rates for languages suggest that, where learners choose to continue with language learning in the senior phase, they do well.
- Since 2013, we have provided an additional £30.2 million to local authorities for the implementation of our ambitious 1+2 language policy.
- Reform Scotland's 2018 report said that the outlook for language learning in Scotland is positive, and our pupils are speaking more languages today than ever before.
- Updated information from local authorities shows that 88% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools are providing the full entitlement to learning a second language from P1 to P7 and from S1 to S3. 47% of primary schools and 83% of secondary schools are also providing pupils with learning in a third additional language in P6 and P7 and from S1 to S3.

Social Studies

- We saw an increase in entries and passes at National 5 level in the social subjects in 2019 compared to 2018 with numbers of passes in History at National 5 up from 11,260 to 11,679, for example.

8, SCQF LEVEL 7 (ADVANCED HIGHER)

Statement:

“There was a 32% rise in the S6 learner population from 2006 to 2014 and a 33.5% rise in attainment over the same period...the significant losses again lie in the Sciences, Technologies and Mathematics (the STEM subjects), as well as in Languages and Social Subjects. Some significant gains are to be found in P.E., Accounting and Chinese Languages (although the latter pair are still small subjects at Level 7).”

Response:

- We welcome the rise in attainment between 2006 and 2014.
- In 2014, the average number of Higher entries by S5 and S6 pupils was 2.3. This has increased to 2.5, in 2019.
- In 2014, the average number of Advanced Higher entries by S6 pupils was 0.7. This has increased to 0.8, in 2019.

9. SCOTTISH BACCALAUREATE

Statement:

- **“Although there has been some recovery of enrolments since 2015, the number of learners attaining a Baccalaureate is now at a second low point, having declined from a peak of 165 to the present 109**
- **“Given that there are 357 state secondary schools in Scotland, plus a small number of private secondary schools, it appears that the Baccalaureate contributes little, if anything, to the set of qualifications gained in most Scottish secondary schools, as the “Baccalaureates per school” rate is only 0.3 Baccalaureates”**

Response

- The Scottish Baccalaureate was never intended to be a mass-market qualification and is offered by a relatively small number (50) of centres who enter on average four students each year.
- The vast majority of these centres are mainstream schools, with a small number of independent schools entering learners for the Science and Languages Scottish Baccalaureate.
- The Scottish Baccalaureate, particularly the interdisciplinary project (IDP) which develops and recognises skills for learning, work and life, supports both the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Skills Development Scotland’s (SDS) skills for the future (also referred to as meta skills).

10, “NO QUALIFICATIONS” DATA. i.e. PUPILS LEAVING WITH NO ATTAINMENT

Statement: The "no qualification" rate has increased from 1.5% in 2012/13 - the year before CfE (i.e. new National Qualifications began to be rolled out) - to 2.0% in 2016/7 to 2.2% in 2017/8.

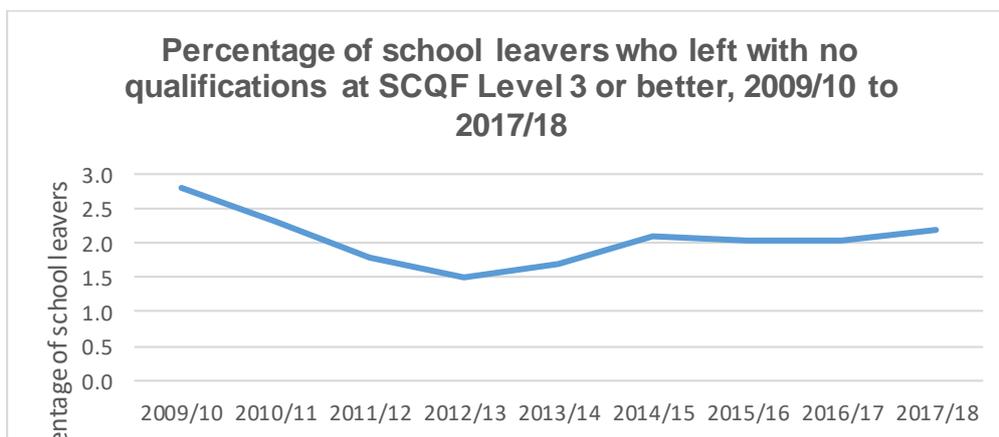
The “no qualification rate” improved in 26 out of 32 local authority areas prior to CfE's introduction, but has since declined in 21 areas. It has more than doubled in 11 areas, including one (Dundee) where it has quadrupled.

Response

- There may be a variety of reasons behind the reduction in the percentage between 2009/10 and 2012/13 and the specific low point of 1.5% in 2012/13
- The percentage has remained relatively stable over the past three years of data
- The figure of 2.2% is lower than the pre-CfE high point of 2.8% in 2009/10.

Percentage of school leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3 or better, 2009/10 to 2017/18

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	2.8	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.2



Statement: Attainment gap in no qualifications data has widened - a 46% increase in the proportion of pupils at the lower end of the academic scale who are leaving with no qualifications.

Response:

- The report draws on the “no qualifications” measure to draw broader substantive conclusions about the poverty-related attainment gap. This differs from the Scottish Government’s definition and measurement of the gap, which draws on a broader set of data.
- While the proportion of leavers with no qualifications is an indicator of lower performance it is not an indicator of the attainment gap as it makes no reference to the deprivation background of these leavers.
- We would recommend that a broader suite of measures are used to monitor the attainment gap rather than focusing on one single statistic such as:

- The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better has reduced from 11.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 6.1 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 20.3 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009/10 to 37.4 percentage points in 2017/18. This is a record low.
- The gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive destination is not a key NIF measure. However it shows the following:
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive follow-up destination has reduced from 20.2 percentage points in 2009/10 to 8.6 percentage points in 2017/18.

Additional data on leavers with no qualifications at SCQF Level 3+

These pupils left with no National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better.

- Around 17% of this group achieved a full award of some kind (188 school leavers)
- a further 43% achieved a Unit or Units as part of a qualification (471 school leavers)
- 40% did not achieve any awards/units (433 school leavers)

11. SCHOOL HANDBOOKS

Statement: Based on analysis of school handbook information of the 357 state secondary schools:

126 (35.3%) did not provide information on the school's qualification presentation policy in any format

25 (7.0%) indicated that they supported learners in studying at SCQF Levels 1-5

165 (46.2%) indicated that they supported learners in studying at SCQF Levels 3-5

41 (11.5%) indicated that they supported learners in studying at SCQF Levels 4-5

Response:

- Schools should be providing the information required by the 2012 Regulations on School Handbooks and local authorities should be taking appropriate steps to ensure that this is the case.
- Scottish Government and ADES were made aware of this issue in 2018 and promptly followed up with reminders to all Directors of Education regarding their responsibilities under the 2012 Regulations.
- Scottish Government and ADES have followed up with a further reminder / communication to Directors of Education in October 2019. This was accompanied

by messages via Education Scotland's weekly alerts to schools, ahead of their annual December deadline to update their Handbooks.

- Professor Scott has indicated to Learning Directorate officials that he is seeing an impact from these communication efforts, and that he anticipates that this will be reflected in his further analysis on the Handbooks information.
- This does mean, however, that it is not sufficient to rely on Handbook or website information alone in order to draw conclusions on the curriculum "offer" provided by a secondary school.

FURTHER POINTS MADE IN PROFESSOR SCOTT'S REPORT

MANAGEMENT / GOVERNANCE OF THE CURRICULUM

Statement: National agencies have "mandated a changed secondary curricular structure" whilst providing (too much) flexibility for schools to develop their own approaches

Response:

- The curriculum provides a broad framework with an appropriate degree of consistency at national level and flexibility at local and school level.
- A core principle is that school curricula and subject choices should meet the needs of individual schools and in particular the pupils within the school.
- This remains our policy. It will be enhanced with the school empowerment reforms.

NO EVALUATION OF CFE

Statement: There has been a "lack of in-depth evaluation of CfE"

Response:

- The report is correct in stating that there has not been a full evaluation research study of CfE.
- But there have been a succession of Education Scotland themed inspection reports as well as wide-ranging OECD review exercises in both 2007 and in 2015.
- More recently (in 2018) Scottish Government commissioned an independent survey of head-teachers on implementing the senior phase. This has laid the basis for an OECD-led review of the senior phase (which will cover many of the issues raised in Professor Scott's report).
- This is not a curriculum that is lacking in scrutiny or challenge.

PUBLIC DEBATE/AWARENESS OF CFE ISSUES

Statement: the "average parent" may not have noticed the existence of major on-going educational issues."

Response:

- The debates around Curriculum for Excellence and senior phase choices have been covered extensively in the media and in this Parliament.
- The “average parent” may in fact be confident that their child is being provided with a broad general education prior to S4 and a wide range of options and learning experiences in the senior phase.

IMPACT OF SCQF TARIFF SCORES

Statement: Increased attainment in individual CfE courses - due to the study of a smaller range of subjects in the same timescale as the previous larger number of subjects – could increase tariff scores without necessarily improving learning or attainment (and while acting detrimentally on breadth of learning)”

Response:

- We are aware of this issue. It is a difficult issue to draw firm conclusions based on evidence. This is about appropriate use of performance data and information, and about schools making appropriate choices for young people.

WELLBEING IN THE CURRICULUM

Statement: There are “few acceptable, or meaningful, metrics exist to measure” wellbeing.

Response:

- Data and evidence on health and wellbeing will be addressed, in part, by the new Health and Wellbeing Census under development by Analytical Services.

Professor Scott’s Report: “No qualification rate”

General SG Comments

Professor Scott’s analysis focusses on the proportion of school leavers who left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better. He refers to these pupils as leaving with ‘no qualifications’ (although some of these pupils do leave with something – see section 3 below).

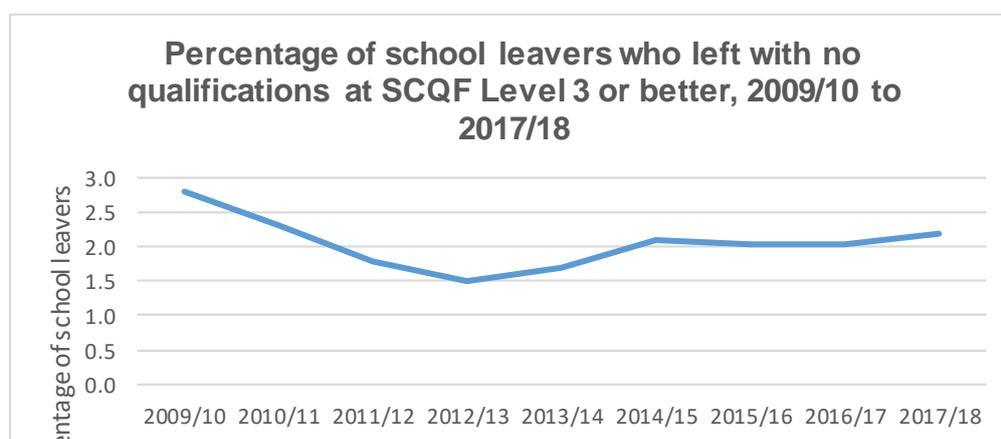
He uses this measure to draw conclusions about the attainment gap. This differs from the Scottish Government’s definition (see section 2 below).

Based on Professor Scott’s definition, broadly speaking his figures are correct although it has not always been possible to exactly replicate the figures he quotes, without specific detail about baselines used.

Looking at particular elements of his analysis:

1. Statement: The "no qualification" rate has increased from 1.5% in 2012/13 - the year before CfE (i.e. new National Qualifications began to be rolled out) - to 2.0% in 2016/7 to 2.2% in 2017/8.

SG analysis: This is correct although it is worth noting that the rate had been higher in the past. For example, in 2009/10 2.8% of school leavers left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better (see chart below). In this context the proportion of pupils leaving with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better has been relatively stable between 2014/15 and 2017/18. However it did increase in 2013/14 having fallen prior to this.



There are three important points of qualification that we would add if MSPs seek to latch onto the point re. the difference between the "low" of 1.5% in 2012/13 and the "high" of 2.2% in 2017/18 to draw conclusions about CfE "causing" more children to leave with no qualifications:

- There may be a variety of reasons behind the reduction in the percentage between 2009/10 and 2012/13 and the specific low point of 1.5% in 2012/13
- The percentage has remained relatively stable over the past three years of data
- The figure of 2.2% is lower than the pre-CfE high point of 2.8% in 2009/10.

2. Statement: The "no qualification rate" improved in 26 out of 32 local authority areas prior to CfE's introduction, but has since declined in 21 areas. It has more than doubled in 11 areas, including one (Dundee) where it has quadrupled.

SG analysis: Assuming 2009/10 as a baseline, we can roughly replicate these figures. Our figures show that between 2009/10 and 2012/13 the proportion of school leavers who left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better decreased (improved) in 25 local authorities and that between 2012/13 and 2017/18 this proportion increased (declined) in 20 local authorities. Our figures show that the proportion doubled in 10 local authorities and, as stated, more than quadrupled in Dundee City.

3. Statement: Attainment gap has widened - a 46% increase in the proportion of pupils at the lower end of the academic scale who are leaving with no qualifications.

SG analysis: We would not usually calculate a percentage change in percentages. However, using the underlying number of pupils: in 2012/13 775 school leavers left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better and in 2017/18 the equivalent figures was 1,092 school leavers, equating to a 41% increase in the number of pupils leaving with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better.

So the analysis is broadly correct, however while the proportion of leavers with no qualifications is an indicator of lower performance it is not an indicator of the attainment gap as it makes no reference to the deprivation background of these leavers.

We would also recommend that a broad suite of measures are used to monitor the attainment gap rather than focusing on one single statistic.

A number of other measures are also used but the following NIF measures are the most relevant to the school leaver cohort covered by Professor Scott's analysis.

- The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better has reduced from 11.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 6.1 percentage points in 2017/18.
- The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 20.3 percentage points in 2017/18.
- The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009/10 to 37.4 percentage points in 2017/18. This is a record low.

The gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive destination is not a key NIF measure. However shows the following:

- The gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive follow-up destination has reduced from 20.2 percentage points in 2009/10 to 8.6 percentage points in 2017/18.

Additional data on leavers with no qualifications at SCQF Level 3+ * Note: The following analysis has not been published. If it is used at the debate or FMQS we are required to publish it.

These pupils left with no National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or better.

- Around 17% of this group achieved a full award of some kind (188 school leavers)
- a further 43% achieved a Unit or Units as part of a qualification (471 school leavers)
- 40% did not achieve any awards/units (433 school leavers)

Numbers of passes at SCQF Levels 5 and 6

Percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 5 or better and SCQF Level 6 or better, 2009/10 to 2017/18

SCQF Level 5 or better

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	85.9	78.8	72.1	65.2	57.4	48.9	38.4
2016/17	86.1	78.8	72.0	64.6	56.7	48.0	37.6
2015/16	85.6	78.1	71.4	64.1	56.0	47.2	37.1
2014/15	85.2	77.4	70.5	63.6	56.2	48.5	40.2
2013/14	84.3	76.3	69.6	63.3	56.5	48.9	40.9
2012/13	82.7	74.1	67.5	61.3	54.6	47.2	39.2
2011/12	81.6	73.1	66.7	61.0	54.6	47.5	39.8
2010/11	79.2	70.2	63.6	57.6	51.3	44.5	37.0
2009/10	77.1	67.9	61.5	55.8	49.9	43.4	36.2

- The proportion of school leavers who achieve SCQF Level 5 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18.
- In 2009/10, 77.1% of school leavers achieved 1 pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 85.9%.
- Similarly, the proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

SCQF Level 6 or better

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	62.2	52.4	44.9	37.9	30.4	19.8	9.6
2016/17	61.2	51.6	44.2	37.3	29.9	19.4	9.3
2015/16	61.7	51.8	44.3	37.2	29.7	19.0	9.1
2014/15	60.2	50.1	42.6	35.7	28.6	18.4	8.5
2013/14	58.1	48.6	41.5	35.1	28.1	17.9	8.3
2012/13	55.8	46.5	39.2	32.8	25.9	16.1	6.8
2011/12	55.8	46.8	39.7	33.4	26.2	16.4	7.0
2010/11	52.3	43.5	36.7	30.3	23.3	13.7	5.5
2009/10	50.4	42.0	35.5	29.4	22.2	12.6	4.9

- The proportion of school leavers who achieved SCQF Level 6 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18.
- In 2009/10, 50.4% of school leavers achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF level 6 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 62.2%.
- Similarly the proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND BRIEFING

Professor Scott's analysis includes a focus on the percentage of young people leaving school with "no qualifications". One of the key roles of Education Scotland is in supporting services to deliver on expectations within Getting it Right for Every Child to ensure children and young people receive the right help at the right time from the right people. The aim is to reduce inequity in educational outcomes for all learners and improve practices to better meet the needs of diverse learners – including those who may be at risk of leaving the education system with no qualifications.

Briefing from Education Scotland:

- At the senior stage of secondary schools, there is a range of provision for senior learners with additional support needs working at SCQF levels 1 and 2 across all curricular areas: expressive arts; health and wellbeing, languages; mathematics; science; social subjects; technologies and employment skills. SQA offers both awards and units.
- The units which form of the core of many learners personalised programmes working at SCQF Level 2 are:- English and communication; lifeskills maths; and, science and the environment; however, a wider suite of course are available.
- The units at Level 1 on independent living; communication and numbers skills are valued by many special schools.

Current action

- Currently, the Education Scotland inclusion team are exploring approaches to expanding this offer with SQA. The awards offered by SQA at these levels are personal achievement/development, cycling and Scottish studies. Schools often provide additional opportunities for learners to develop skills for learning, life and work through participating in national youth awards including, for example, John Muir, Saltire, Youth Achievement and ASDAN. These awards are not collated nationally so do not contribute to the national attainment/achievement profile.
- **ANNEX M: PROFESSOR PRIESTLEY'S RESEARCH**

The article cited is a [blog post](#) based on a [paper](#) by Marina Shapira, Camilla Barnett, Tracey Peace-Hughes, Mark Priestley and Michelle Ritchie (Stirling University). A TES article has also been published (the content is virtually the same as the blog). They are in response to the debate about the impact of CfE and the new qualification system on attainment and education performance.

Both articles draw on material from Priestley and Shapira's previously published research, and are not of themselves "new research." Their programme of research into this topic is ongoing.

Crucially, their research also concludes that there is a “narrowing of the curriculum” under CfE and that there has been a greater impact on socio-economically disadvantaged areas, schools and pupils. They use an alternative, more in-depth methodology, definition of attainment and some different data than does Prof. Scott.

Contrast with Prof. Scott’s analysis

- Prof Priestley’s core criticism of Prof Scott’s analysis is around the definition of attainment. Prof Scott defines this as total volume of passes whereas Prof Priestley uses SCQF level of pass (performance) and *pass rates*. This alternative approach does not directly counter the conclusions Prof Scott presents.
- Prof Priestley’s analysis clearly states that a reduction in volume of passes does not *necessarily* imply a decline in standards (top page 3), which is self-evidently true. "Claiming that the total number of qualifications achieved has fallen is not the same as saying that grades have fallen. To claim the former as a fall in attainment is misleading. The reason for this is that a drop in the total number of qualifications achieved is not necessarily evidence of a decline in standards; it may simply be that fewer qualifications are being taken..."
- But the core of the Scott argument is that a smaller volume of passes is in itself a bad thing. Priestley’s analysis does not address this. Scott concludes the reduction is due to a narrowing of the curriculum which he considers an unintended consequence of the new qualifications system. Whereas Priestley takes the narrower curriculum as part of the *design* of the new qualifications system. Whilst Priestley’s analysis correctly shows that the number of SCQF Level 5 passes as a **proportion** of SCQF Levels 3-5 passes has increased, this has partly been driven by a lower number of passes at SCQF Level 3 in particular.
- Priestley argues there are difficulties in comparing pre- and post-CfE data because of the different qualification systems but his arguments here appear a little confused:
 - It is true we cannot compare **entries and pass rates** for Standard Grades with **entries and pass rates** in the new Nationals as they work differently (dual entry in Foundation/General or General/Credit levels at Standard Grade; not the case for Nationals),
 - but we *can* compare the **number of passes**; Priestley’s rationale for not doing so is *because* CfE was designed to lead to fewer subjects;
 - He is also wrong to suggest the SQAs Standard Grade data double-counts entries at multiple levels. Our understanding from extensive discussions with SQA since 2012 is that this is not the case, and that only one entry per subject was recorded.
- Prof Priestley also notes the need to consider the impact of demographic changes as a contributory factor to reduced overall passes and entries. This is correct, but our own analysis of the data shows it is a small factor and does not explain the trends that we have seen in volume of entries and/or passes. Prof Scott’s previous papers have explicitly examined this.
- Prof. Scott’s analysis argues that the new qualifications system has led to a reduction in attainment for those at the lower end of the ability spectrum (i.e. the growth in

leavers with no passes at SCQF Level 3+ point). Priestley does not contend these data (they are based on official figures), and notes that the rate, and increase, in the % with no quals at SCQF Level 3+ is a "cause for great concern".

Summary

Overall:

- Prof Priestley is critical of Prof Scott's methodology and his use of terminology about attainment;

"We do, however, have some concerns about their methodological rigour... and conclusions that are drawn from them".

- Prof. Priestley makes use of the same attainment/outcomes data we have been using in response to the debate, preferring it to Prof Scott's figures, and adding credibility to its use.

" Scottish Government published data shows that over years there was increase in the proportion of school leavers leaving schools in S6, from 55% in 2009 to 67% in 2019 (see Chart 4). There was also an increase in proportion of young people leaving schools with at least SCQF level 5 or better in literacy (from 63% in 2012-13 to 80% in 2018-19) and numeracy (from 56.6% in 2012-2013 to 70% in 2018-19..."

"Finally, a school leaver's destination is a very important outcome by which curriculum impacts could be accessed...The trends show that over the period there was an increase of the percentage of young people who made transitions to Higher Education (an increase from about 36% to 41% over the entire period, and an increase from about 38% to 41% after the introduction of CfE), as well as increase in employment (from 18.5% to 22.7% over the entire period). At the same time, the proportion of school leavers who were unemployed and looking for work decreased."

- But this article does not directly counter the specific points Scott et al are making, and in fact in a number of places reiterates the broad conclusion around narrowing of subject choice (as seen in their recent publications). The conclusion reached is that a deeper, more considered analysis of the issue is needed than is being presented by the media and commentators.

ANNEX N: KEY MESSAGES FROM THE HEADTEACHER SURVEY

In September we published the results of a survey of Secondary Headteachers in Scottish secondary schools which provided their views and experiences of implementing the Senior Phase curriculum.

This survey provides evidence of the very wide range of courses and qualifications that learners can choose from.

In an empowered system where the voice of practitioners is key, there are many very heartening messages in the survey, reflecting the transformation that the profession has led for young people in the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

The voice of our headteachers helps to put the debate on subject choice into context. For example:

- Schools accommodate requests for more or fewer course choices by offering flexibility for young people. 97% of headteachers said that they are flexible in their approach and offer individualised timetables where possible.
- 95% of headteachers say that young people can shape their senior phase. A wider range of course and options are available for young people than ever before. For example, 90% of schools reported offering N4, N5, Highers, Foundation Apprenticeships and college provision in S5.
- The majority of headteachers (85%) feel they are achieving an “*integrated, progressive and coherent experience for young people in the Senior Phase*”.
- The majority of headteachers (77%) are very confident or confident that their school provides a sufficient variety of learning pathways to meet the needs of all their young people across the Senior Phase.
- A majority (88%) also felt they had sufficient autonomy to determine the pathways that their school offers in the Senior Phase.
- Schools offered a wide range of courses and qualifications, including college provision (93% of schools at S5), Duke of Edinburgh Award (91% of schools at S4), Foundation Apprenticeship (94% at S5), and Saltire Awards (69% at S6).
- Over half of headteachers started planning for the Senior Phase when young people are in S2.
- Overall, 90% of headteachers felt they were able to mostly or completely ensure continuity of learning between the BGE and the Senior Phase.

We will ensure that this key evidence from headteachers is considered as part of that review.

Sample size/methodology

The online survey was distributed to all secondary school headteachers in June 2019. A total of 159 responses forms the basis of the report. Response rate was 45% and the sample was broadly representative of

secondary schools in Scotland in relation to size of school, urban/rural location, and proportion of pupils from 20% most deprived areas.

The recent Headteacher Survey provides evidence of the very wide range of courses and qualifications that learners can choose from.

SPICE BRIEFING PAPER – RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS & ISSUES RAISED

THEME 1: 2019 EXAM DIET

Whether there has been a policy focus on improving the highest level of qualification individuals leave school with. If so, whether there has been a trade-off in terms of the number of qualifications individuals are leaving school with.

- The focus should be on the whole experience, rather on the number of subjects, and on the qualifications achieved by the time a person leaves school – that is what matters for an apprenticeship, college, university place or employment and for their future lives.
- More young people are choosing to remain at school, with almost two thirds leaving in S6 (from 55.0% in 2009/10 to 62.7% in 2017/18).
- In 2017/18, for the first time ever, more than 30% of pupils achieved at least five passes at Higher or better – that is up from 22.2% in 2009/10.
- Under Curriculum for Excellence, there are no set notions about the number or types of qualifications taken at each stage of the senior phase.
- The guiding principle is that qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the senior phase.
- Therefore, as part of the current Senior Phase arrangements, it may well mean that young people take fewer qualifications – particularly at levels 3,4 and 5 - than they did under the old standard grade model. It will mean that the design of the senior phase will look different from school to school.
- A Senior Phase where young people study for fewer qualifications enables teachers to offer more time for high quality learning and teaching, and in depth learning. It also provides time for young people to follow courses and awards that help them develop skills and attributes in wider aspects such as employability, leadership and voluntary work.
- The scope for schools to decide what is best for their own learners is a key principle of CfE and of the empowering schools agenda. As

the OECD made clear, curriculum reform has to come from schools rather than waiting for central direction.

CfE original intentions

- It was always considered that the introduction of curriculum for excellence might alter the pattern of the Senior Phase.
- From the outset we were clear, in the entitlements of CFE that the senior phase curriculum would:
 - comprise more than programmes which lead to qualifications;
 - have a continuing emphasis on health and wellbeing;
 - provide opportunities for personal achievement, service to others and practical experience of the world of work.
- These entitlements represented a clear and deliberate broadening of our focus to beyond exams and traditional qualifications.
- A Curriculum Review Programme Board was established (consisting of Scottish Executive officials, national bodies, teachers and head teachers) and this group published a “progress and proposals” report in 2006 which made clear that it expected there would be fundamental shifts in curriculum design:

“We wish to consider, for example, whether it would be desirable and possible for choices to take place over a more extended period across S1 to S3, rather than the S2 course choice model”

“By the end of S3, learners should have established a solid basis of learning on which they can build as they move into a framework of qualifications”

- A ‘what might change section’ made clear the following:

“In due course, changes needed in the S4 to S6 curriculum, to build upon the revised S1 to S3 base ... Scope to plan for S4 to 6 as a single stage with a great deal of opportunity for individual pathways”

- In 2011, the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board published a “Statement on the Senior Phase” which said:

“The Management Board welcomes the emerging picture of bespoke senior phase models. These show that some schools will

plan for five or six subjects in S4 - viewing it as a way of facilitating deeper learning, making space for recognising wider achievements and providing scope for taking qualifications over differing timescales eg: two year Highers. Other schools may prefer to offer, for example, eight courses of study in S4 with the option of being presented for all eight in S4 or deferring several subjects in S4, knowing that further study in these subjects will continue in S5. Similarly, some pupils may defer presentation in a subject in S5 until S6.”

- In February 2013, Education Scotland published guidance on “*Progression from the Broad General Education to the Senior Phase*”, which said:
 - “*At present, most schools are implementing or maintaining approaches that enable young people to study between five and eight SQA qualifications in S4, usually alongside other important areas of learning. Some features of emerging models include:*
 - *in S4 and S5, delivering typically two-year programmes for young people to learn across two levels, such as National 5 and Higher, with S6 being a single year programme which includes a range of Advanced Highers or a Scottish Baccalaureate and which perhaps involves colleges;*
 - *developing a neighbourhood consortium or ‘campus’ approach where education authorities, schools and partners such as colleges have aligned provision and timetabling to maximise the range of achievement pathways with courses available to young people at all levels;*
 - *delivering S4-S6 as a single cohort within which young people can opt for a mixture of subjects and levels and learn in mixed-age groups – this can help provide a wider range of classes*
 - *providing six qualifications for all in S4, followed by flexible planning over the next two years with study for Higher and Advanced Higher; and*
 - *delivering a flexible combination of one- or two-year programmes.”*
- And this guidance was updated in May 2016 to say:
 - “*During S4, learners may be studying for some qualifications which will result in presentation at the end of S4. They may equally continue studying over two years in some subjects until the end of S5 before being presented for a qualification. The same may apply across S5 and S6, with qualifications being taken over one or two years.... With this in mind, schools should plan for young people to progress smoothly on to following anything between six and eight qualification*

courses from S4 onwards, with certification of each over a mix of one or two years, as appropriate to their individual needs.”

The reasons for the continued fall in the average number of National Qualifications and Skills for Work Qualifications per senior phase pupil since 2017.

Much of the recent debate appears to assume that more qualifications at levels 4 and 5 is necessarily better. It does not recognise that there is scope to provide the NQs in a different way designed to personalise learning for young people, e.g. by studying Nationals over S4 and S5, or Highers over S4 and S5, removing the need for a linear progression from National, to Highers to Advanced Highers.

Eileen Prior (Connect) said 1 May in evidence to Committee: “Of course, Scottish Qualifications Authority exams are not the only route for young people. We are a bit fixed on it being about nationals, highers and advanced highers, but there are many other qualifications for young people.

*One of the conversations is surely about the range of opportunities for young people. **Something that exercises me is that many parents get very wound up about the number of nationals a young person can take**, although we know that the number of nationals that they accumulate will not have any impact if, for example, the young person wants to go to university. Therefore, that is not the right conversation for that young person, and we should focus on highers. I get a sense that we, and the system, are caught up in the rigidity of nationals, highers and advanced highers when the conversation should be a more flexible one about the range of opportunities that are available to all our young people.*

We focus on the awards pupils achieve by the time they leave school

- More young people are choosing to remain at school, with almost two thirds leaving in S6 (from 55.0% in 2009/10 to 62.7% in 2017/18).
- In 2017/18, for the first time ever, more than 30% of pupils achieved at least five passes at Higher or better – that is up from 22.2% in 2009/10.

Performance at Level 6 - Higher – has improved

- How these things are counted has changed over the years so we cannot always make direct comparisons.
- When we took office, significantly less than half of pupils (41.6%) left school with a Higher (or equivalent) or better. Now almost two-thirds (62.2%) get at least that.
- And, where we can make direct comparison over recent years, we find those getting a Higher or better is up from 50.4% in 2009/10 to 62.2% in 2017/18.

Achievement at Level 5 – National 5 - is also up

- Again, direct comparisons cannot always be made with previous years due to changes to how things are counted.
- In 2006/7 the percentage of school leavers getting a level 5 qualification – such as Nationals - or better was 71.1%. In 2017/18, it was 85.9%.
- And looking at the last few years, where we can make direct comparisons, we find an increase of almost 9 percentage points from 77.1% in 2009/10.

All of this is before we consider the wider range of vocational provision

- The number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at Level 5 and above has increased from 7.3% in 2013/14 to 14.8% in 2017/18.
- Over 54,000 skills-based qualifications have been achieved this year (2019), more than double the figure attained in 2012 (from 24,849 to 54,406).

Now that Insight data is available some analysis can be carried out on the actual achievements of young people. At national level, the following tables show the pattern for performance for SCQF level 5 and SCQF level 6:

SCQF level 5 by the end of S5 (based on S4) National	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 or more awards	85.3%	85.8%	86.5%	86.2%
2 or more awards	78.1%	79.0%	79.9%	79.8%
3 or more awards	71.5%	72.7%	73.8%	73.9%
4 or more awards	64.5%	65.7%	67.0%	67.4%

5 or more awards	55.6%	57.2%	58.6%	59.6%
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SCQF level 6 by the end of S5 (based on S4) National	2016	2017	2018	2019
1 or more awards	59.1%	59.7%	60.4%	61.6%
2 or more awards	48.1%	48.5%	49.5%	51.2%
3 or more awards	38.8%	39.5%	40.4%	42.5%
4 or more awards	29.2%	30.1%	30.7%	33.2%
5 or more awards	18.8%	19.4%	20.1%	22.1%

This data includes all awards at these levels and would include other qualifications such as, National Progression Awards.

To date, what work has been done by the Scottish Government or its agencies to ascertain the extent to which entries to shorter vocational courses may be replacing longer traditional subjects in senior phase.

- To support us in better understanding the impact of the DYW programme, in addition to the KPIs, we have commenced a programme-wide evaluation. The evaluation will add value to the KPIs by using qualitative and mixed methods evidence to help us consider nuanced longer term outcomes, such as attitude and behaviour changes towards parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications.
- Work is also being progressed to understand the extent to which there are differences in attainment and destinations between ‘middle cohort’ young people who undertake a senior phase vocational pathway (SPVP), and ‘middle cohort’ young people who do not undertake a SPVP. This will help facilitate analysis and policy work to ensure that the DYW offer is being taken up by and is useful for all those young people who stand to benefit, especially those for whom the absence of a SPVP may lead to non-participation.

What might explain the downward trends in pass rates since 2016 at National 4, Higher, Advanced Higher and Skills for Work

qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6. What are the Scottish Government's policy responses to address this.

As always, there are issues we need to understand further in some qualifications.

- Annual fluctuations in the pass rate for qualifications are evidence of a robust qualifications and awarding system that maintains the highest standards.
- If the exam pass rate only ever went up, people would rightly question the credibility of our system.
- SQA publish Course Reports online for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher annually, these provide information on where improvements could be focused.
- Course reports are a valuable resource for teachers and lecturers to prepare candidates for future assessment .
- Education Scotland and local authorities will then explore what further subject-specific support can be provided nationally, through Regional Improvement Collaboratives and by Education Scotland's regional teams.

THEME 3: SUBJECT CHOICES REPORT

Narrowing of choice/ Equity of access to subjects

- The Committee itself acknowledged that “there is, depending on availability, a wider range of subjects and alternative pathways for pupils to choose from than existed before”
- The Senior Phase is a three year experience - what matters is the qualifications and awards that pupils leave school with
- The guiding principle is that qualifications are taken at the appropriate stage for the individual young person over the three years of the senior phase.
- Under the current arrangements, schools now have the freedom and flexibility to design a bespoke three year senior phase of a range of courses and qualifications tailored to meet the needs of the young people at the school.
- This inevitably leads to variation and it is for schools to make decisions on the best model for their young people.
- In the recent headteacher survey on the senior phase curriculum 97% of headteachers said that they are flexible in their approach and offer individualised timetables where possible.

The need for further research and an independent review of the Senior Phase

- An independent review of the Senior Phase has been commissioned.
- The review will explore how Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented for young people in S4-S6 across the country. It will be principally focused on understanding the experiences learners as well as practitioners, parents and carers.
- To ensure the review is independent and robust we have asked the OECD to lead the review.
- We will ensure that the Scottish Parliament and the education sector is closely involved in the process. I have written to the Committee seeking their views on this.
- The review will start in December, with an interim report expected in June 2020 and a final report expected in August 2020.

Multi-level teaching

- Running bi-level or multi-level course classes is one approach many schools have used for many years to increase the amount of choice available to their pupils.
- There will be varying levels of prior attainment in any class and Education Scotland has yet to see any firm evidence from inspections of educational disadvantage due to multilevel teaching.
- In line with the unanimous decision of the Parliament on 1 May 2019, we will be conducting an independent review of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence. The review will provide an opportunity to look at the impact of different approaches to learning and teaching, including bi-level and multi-level teaching.

Status of N4 qualifications

- National 4 is a key part of the range of awards and qualifications on offer within the Senior Phase and is fully accredited.
- It is an important qualification in its own right and a credible pathway through the senior phase, and should not be seen as a consolation prize.
- It is not intended to be seen simply as a stepping stone to National 5.
- National 4 is also a gateway to vocational learning - and a different range of qualifications - that is better pathway for some learners.
- Those taking National 4 can use it to move into college or training and other qualifications at SCQF Levels 5 and beyond.
- This can include National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Apprenticeships.

- Teachers and schools, in partnership with young people and parents/carers, are best placed to decide the most appropriate path for a young person.
- There remain strong educational reasons for having no exam at National 4:
- The Curriculum and Assessment Board, which represents all parts of our education system, carried out a review and found that there was no consensus for having an exam at National 4.
- National 4 is internally assessed, this is a valid assessment method used widely across the education sector, including within Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, and within Colleges and Universities.

ENCLOSURE 4. ANALYSIS OF MARK PRIESTLEY ANALYSIS 12 NOVEMBER 2019

- The core of the disagreement here is around the definition of attainment. Prof Scott defines this as volume of passes whereas Prof Priestley appears to define this as level of pass (performance) and pass rates. This in itself does not counter the data Prof Scott presents.
- Prof Priestley's best direct argument here is that a reduction in volume of passes does not *necessarily* imply a decline in standards (top page 3), which is self-evidently true.
- But the core of the Scott argument is that a lower volume of passes is a bad thing. Priestley's analysis does not address this. Scott concludes this is due to a narrowing of the curriculum, an unintended consequence of the new qualifications system. Whereas Priestley takes the narrower curriculum as part of the *design* of the new qualifications system. Whilst Priestley's analysis correctly shows that the number of SCQF Level 5 passes as a **proportion** of SCQF Levels 3-5 passes has increased, this has partly been driven by a lower number of passes at SCQF Level 3 in particular.
- Priestley argues you shouldn't compare pre- and post-CfE data because of the different qualification systems but his arguments are a bit confused:
 - It is true you cannot compare **entries and pass rates** for Standard Grades (SGs) with **entries and pass rates** in a Nationals (NQs) era,
 - but you can compare the number of **passes**; Priestley's rationale for not doing so is *because* CfE was designed to lead to fewer subjects
 - *I believe he is also wrong to suggest the SGs data from SQA double-counts SG entries at multiple levels. Our understanding from extensive*

discussions with SQA since 2012 is that the opposite is true – it is more likely that dual entries are recorded under NQs than under SGs.

-
- Scott's analysis argues that the new qualifications system has led to a reduction in attainment for those at the lower end of the ability spectrum (the no passes at SCQF3+ point). Priestley does not contend these data (nor do we), and notes that the rate, and increase, in the % with no quals at SCQF3+ is a “cause for great concern”

Summary

So overall, we can justifiably, and safely, refer to:

- the debate about the nature of the analysis and the need for rigorous analysis on the matter.
- We can also cite Priestley's use of the same attainment/outcomes data we have been using as that adds some credibility to its use.
- But this paper/blog does not rebut the specific points Scott et al are making, and in fact in a number of places reiterates the broad conclusion around narrowing of subject choice

ENCLOSURE 5: ANALYSIS OF PROFESSOR JIM SCOTT'S PAPER ON ATTAINMENT 6 NOVEMBER 2019

Professor Scott's paper covers a wide range of topics related to CfE, including its original design principles, how it is delivered in practice, how it has affected pupil attainment and subject choice (including performance in specific subjects), SG's approach to evaluation, and how schools are communicating with parents on their own circumstances. This note focuses on the key issues from his analysis which have formed part of the current debate, and not on *all* the issues raised in his paper.

Issue raised: The 'no qualification' rate has increased.

- "The 'no qualification' rate has increased from 1.5% in 2012/13 - the year before CfE (i.e. new National Qualifications began to be rolled out) - to 2.0% in 2016/7 to 2.2% in 2017/8."
- "The 'no qualification rate' improved in 26 out of 32 local authority areas prior to CfE's introduction, but has since declined in 21 areas. It has more than doubled in 11 areas, including three where it has trebled and one (Dundee) where it has quadrupled."

Our response:

- This analysis is correct although the rate had been higher in the past - in 2009/10 2.8% of school leavers left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better.
- In this context, the proportion of pupils leaving with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better has been relatively stable between 2014/15 and 2017/18. However it did increase in 2013/14 having fallen prior to this.
- At LA level, then assuming 2009/10 as a baseline, we can largely replicate his figures. Between 2009/10 and 2012/13 the proportion of school leavers who left with no qualifications at SCQF level 3 or better decreased (improved) in 25 local authorities and that between 2012/13 and 2017/18 this proportion increased (declined) in 20 local authorities. Our figures show that the proportion doubled in 10 local authorities and, as stated, more than quadrupled in Dundee City. [see *Tables at end of this document*]
- This data, as with much of Professor Scott's analysis, focuses solely on National Qualifications at SCQF Level 3 and above. The majority of these leavers did achieve a course award or unit assessment – around a fifth left with a course award, for example a National 2, an Employability Award or a Modern Languages for Life and Work Award. A further two-fifths achieved one or more unit assessments:
 - Around 17% of this group achieved a full award of some kind (188 school leavers)
 - a further 43% achieved a Unit or Units as part of a qualification (471 school leavers)
 - 40% did not achieve any awards/units (433 school leavers)

Issue raised: Widening attainment gap in 'no qualifications' data.

- “Attainment gap in ‘no qualifications data has widened’ - a 46% increase in the proportion of pupils at the lower end of the academic scale who are leaving with no qualifications.”

Our response:

- The report draws on the ‘no qualifications’ measure to make broader substantive conclusions about the poverty-related attainment gap. This differs from the Scottish Government’s definition and measurement of the gap, which draws on a broader set of data.
- While the proportion of leavers with no qualifications is an indicator of lower performance, it is not an indicator of the attainment gap as it makes no reference to the deprivation background of these leavers.
- We use a far broader set indicators, set out within the NIF, that were chosen following extensive consultation with education stakeholders and others, these include:
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 4 or better has reduced from 11.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 6.1 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 5 or better has reduced from 33.3 percentage points in 2009/10 to 20.3 percentage points in 2017/18.
 - The gap between those from the most and least deprived areas achieving one pass or more at SCQF Level 6 or better has reduced from 45.6 percentage points in 2009/10 to 37.4 percentage points in 2017/18. This is a record low.
 - Although not a key NIF measure, it does show that the gap between those from the most and least deprived communities in a positive follow-up destination has reduced from 20.2 percentage points in 2009/10 to 8.6 percentage points in 2017/18.

Issue raised: Lack of evaluation of Curriculum for Excellence

- There has been a ‘lack of in-depth evaluation of CfE’.

Our response:

- The report is correct in stating that there has not been a full evaluation research study of CfE.
- We commissioned wide-ranging independent reviews by the OECD in both 2007 and in 2015.
- There has been a succession of Education Scotland themed inspection reports.
- More recently (in 2018) Scottish Government commissioned an independent survey of head-teachers on the implementation of the senior phase. This has laid the basis for an OECD-led review of the senior phase (which will cover many of the issues raised in Professor Scott’s report).
- CfE is not a curriculum that is lacking in scrutiny or challenge.

Issue raised: Reduced increase in the number of alternative qualifications offered.

- “In the pre-CfE period, from 2011 to 2013, the total number of “alternative” qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 267%, from 9,636 to 25,704, an increase of 16,068 qualifications per annum by 2013. In the CfE era from 2013 to 2019, the total number of ‘alternative’ qualifications gained at SCQF Level 3-5 grew by 60%, with 15,384 extra qualifications per annum by 2019. Given that this period is three times as long as the pre-CfE period analysed, this is clearly a much smaller rate of rise.”
- The increase in number of alternative qualifications is not large enough to compensate for reduction in what Liz Smith called 'core subjects'.

Our response:

- The “pre CfE” data increased from a much lower base.
- The overall increase in wider attainment and achievement awards is a testament to the success of our Developing the Young Workforce reforms and the breadth of the renewed “offer” across CfE.
- Provision of vocational qualifications and awards in the senior phase is growing, therefore increasing choice for young people
- There are more ways for our young people to progress, whether through National Qualifications or through other recognised, accredited qualifications
- This includes a significant expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF level 6, allowing for further progression
- There has been an increase in the uptake of vocational qualifications available to those in the senior phase year on year and we are committed to continuing this.
- There has been a year on year increase in the number of school leavers attaining vocational qualifications at SCQF 5 and above. From 7.3% in 2013/14 to 9% in 2014/15, 10.7% in 2015/16, 12.8% in 2016/17 and 14.8% in 2017/18 .
- Over 54,000 skills-based qualifications were achieved in 2019, more than double the figure attained in 2012 (24,849).

Issue raised: Decline in attainment at SCQF level 3-5.

- “A highly significant decline of 18.0% in overall attainment took place from 2012-13 to 2013-14, the first S4 year of CfE and nNQs.”
- “SCQF 3 passes declined from 60,347 in 2013 to 16,958 in 2019, a decline of 71.9% (and this incorporates a small element of recovery in 2018 and 2019)”
- “SCQF 4 passes declined from 170,378 to 92,845, a decline of 45.5%”
- “SCQF 5 passes declined from 272,496 to 225,594, a decline of 17.2% over the period”

Our response:

- Looking at yearly snapshots does not capture the package of achievements and awards achieved by a young person at the end of their Senior Phase. It is what young people achieve by the time they leave school that matters.
- The shift towards new and alternative options will play some role in driving this shift in data.
- These points will be explored in full as part of the Senior Phase Review.

Issue raised: Attainment at SCQF level 6.

- “There is a 4-year negative trend in enrolments and attainment at Higher Grade (coinciding with the introduction of CfE courses)”.
- “Significant growth of Higher enrolments (+7.2%) and attainment (+7.5%) in the 4 pre-CfE years, set against a slowly declining population, has been replaced by a significant decline in the 4 post-2015 CfE years, with Higher enrolment (-6.0%) and attainment (-9.4%), against a stable population of S5 learner numbers.”
- “The post-NQ decline in attainment from 2015 to 2019 has clearly outstripped the decline in enrolments i.e. not all of the decline in attainment is explained by learners eschewing Highers for ‘alternatives’ or failing to reach an S4 standard sufficient to give them entry to Higher - more enrollees are failing in the new CfE Higher system.”

Our response:

- It is correct that we have seen a drop in the number of entries, passes and the pass rate at Higher (see table below from published SQA sources).

SQA Higher (SCQF Level 6) Performance (Pre-Review)

Entries										
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	107,295	197,774	194,813	191,951	185,914
Previous Higher	175,492	178,838	181,568	183,314	191,850	92,555	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	175,492	178,838	181,568	183,314	191,850	199,850	197,774	194,813	191,951	185,914

Passes										
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	85,019	152,701	150,010	147,419	138,972
Previous Higher	130,978	134,458	139,698	141,873	147,899	70,981	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	130,978	134,458	139,698	141,873	147,899	156,000	152,701	150,010	147,419	138,972

Pass Rate										
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Higher	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	79.2%	77.2%	77.0%	76.8%	74.8%
Previous Higher	74.6%	75.2%	76.9%	77.4%	77.1%	76.7%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	74.6%	75.2%	76.9%	77.4%	77.1%	78.1%	77.2%	77.0%	76.8%	74.8%

- In a system where the standard remains consistent, we can expect year on year fluctuations in performance subject-by-subject.
- The Deputy First Minister has repeatedly acknowledged the overall fall in this year’s Higher pass rate (down 2 percentage points), particularly in relation to English (down 2.7 percentage points) and Mathematics (down 2.1 percentage points) but has also stressed that this was a strong set of exam results, with three-quarters of candidates attaining a pass at Higher grades A-C. Over a quarter of candidates in 2019 achieved a grade A at Higher (28.3% in 2019 compared to 28.4% in 2018).
- The proportion of school leavers who achieve SCQF Level 5 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18:
 - In 2009/10, 77.1% of school leavers achieved 1 pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 85.9%.
 - The proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

Percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 5, 2009/10 to 2017/18

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	85.9	78.8	72.1	65.2	57.4	48.9	38.4
2016/17	86.1	78.8	72.00	64.6	56.7	48	37.6
2015/16	85.6	78.1	71.4	64.1	56	47.2	37.1
2014/15	85.2	77.4	70.5	63.6	56.2	48.5	40.2
2013/14	84.3	76.3	69.6	63.3	56.5	48.9	40.9
2012/13	82.7	74.1	67.5	61.3	54.6	47.2	39.2
2011/12	81.6	73.1	66.7	61	54.6	47.5	39.8
2010/11	79.2	70.2	63.6	57.6	51.3	44.5	37
2009/10	77.1	67.9	61.5	55.8	49.9	43.4	36.2

- The proportion of school leavers who achieved SCQF Level 6 qualifications has increased between 2009/10 and 2017/18:
 - In 2009/10, 50.4% of school leavers achieving 1 pass or more at SCQF level 6 or better. By 2017/18 this had increased to 62.2%.
 - The proportions leaving with 2 passes or more, 3 passes or more etc. have all increased during this period.

Percentage of leavers by number of passes achieved at SCQF Level 6 or better, 2009/10 to 2017/18

	1 pass or more	2 passes or more	3 passes or more	4 passes or more	5 passes or more	6 passes or more	7 passes or more
2017/18	62.2	52.4	44.9	37.9	30.4	19.8	9.6
2016/17	61.2	51.6	44.2	37.3	29.9	19.4	9.3
2015/16	61.7	51.8	44.3	37.2	29.7	19	9.1
2014/15	60.2	50.1	42.6	35.7	28.6	18.4	8.5
2013/14	58.1	48.6	41.5	35.1	28.1	17.9	8.3
2012/13	55.8	46.5	39.2	32.8	25.9	16.1	6.8
2011/12	55.8	46.8	39.7	33.4	26.2	16.4	7
2010/11	52.3	43.5	36.7	30.3	23.3	13.7	5.5
2009/10	50.4	42	35.5	29.4	22.2	12.6	4.9

Issue raised: Attainment at SCQF level 7 (Advanced Higher)

- “Over the whole period from 2014 to 2019, attainment rose by 1.9%, clearly outstripping the 9% population decline [of the S6 pupil cohort] in the period”

Our response:

- The rise in attainment between 2006 and 2014 and the increase in attainment from 2014 to 2019, despite a reduction in the S6 learner population, is welcomed.

- In 2014, the average number of Advanced Higher entries by S6 pupils was 0.7. This has increased to 0.8, in 2019.

Issue raised: Scottish Baccalaureate

- “Although there has been some recovery of enrolments since 2015, the number of learners attaining a Baccalaureate is now at a second low point, having declined from a peak of 165 to the present 109”.

Our response:

- The Scottish Baccalaureate was never intended to be a mass-market qualification and is offered by a relatively small number (50) of centres who enter on average four students each year.
- The vast majority of these centres are mainstream schools, with a small number of independent schools entering learners for the Science and Languages Scottish Baccalaureate.
- The Scottish Baccalaureate, particularly the interdisciplinary project (IDP) which develops and recognises skills for learning, work and life, supports both the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Skills Development Scotland’s (SDS) skills for the future (also referred to as meta skills).

**Learning Directorate
6 November 2019**

ENCLOSURE 6: HEADTEACHER SURVEY PUBLICATION BRIEFING 24 SEPTEMBER 2019

Top lines

Today we published the results of a survey of Secondary Headteachers in Scottish secondary schools which provides their views and experiences of implementing the Senior Phase curriculum.

Follow up lines:

In an empowered system where the voice of practitioners is key, there are many very heartening messages in the survey, reflecting the transformation that the profession has led for young people in the Senior Phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

The voice of our headteachers helps to put the debate on subject choice into context. For example:

- Schools accommodate requests for more or fewer course choices by offering flexibility for young people. 97% of headteachers said that they are flexible in their approach and offer individualised timetables where possible.
- 95% of headteachers say that young people can shape their senior phase. A wider range of course and options are available for young people than ever before. For example, 90% of schools reported offering N4, N5, Highers, Foundation Apprenticeships and college provision in S5.
- The majority of headteachers (85%) feel they are achieving an “*integrated, progressive and coherent experience for young people in the Senior Phase*”.
- The majority of headteachers (77%) are very confident or confident that their school provides a sufficient variety of learning pathways to meet the needs of all their young people across the Senior Phase.
- A majority (88%) also felt they had sufficient autonomy to determine the pathways that their school offers in the Senior Phase.
- Schools offered a wide range of courses and qualifications, including college provision (93% of schools at S5), Duke of Edinburgh Award (91% of schools at S4), Foundation Apprenticeship (94% at S5), and Saltire Awards (69% at S6).
- Over half of headteachers started planning for the Senior Phase when young people are in S2.
- Overall, 90% of headteachers felt they were able to mostly or completely ensure continuity of learning between the BGE and the Senior Phase.

The Deputy First Minister has announced an independent review of the Senior Phase, to explore how Curriculum for Excellence is being implemented for young people in S4-S6 across the country and identify any improvements that might be made to support the best outcomes for all learners. We will ensure that this key evidence from headteachers is considered as part of that review.

Sample size/methodology

The online survey was distributed to all secondary school headteachers in June 2019. A total of 159 responses forms the basis of the report. Response rate was 45% and the sample was broadly representative of secondary schools in Scotland in relation to size of school, urban/rural location, and proportion of pupils from 20% most deprived areas.

ENCLOSURE 7: HEADTEACHERS SURVEY PUBLISHED 25 SEPTEMBER 2019

[Redact 25(1)]

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/senior-phase-headteacher-survey/>

ENCLOSURE 8: PUBLICATION OF TEACHER SURVEY MINUTE TO DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER 12 SEPTEMBER 2019

Learning Analysis
2 September 2019

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Purpose

1. To inform DFM of the forthcoming research publication, 'Senior Phase: Headteacher Survey', scheduled for **9:30 am on Wednesday 25 September**

Timing

2. Routine. A response by **20 September** would allow for the publication to be published on 25 September and be included in the DFMs keynote speech at the Scottish Learning Festival.

Background

3. The [Research Strategy for Scottish Education](#) committed to developing a comprehensive evidence base on how the Curriculum for Excellence is being planned and implemented in schools in all parts of Scotland. This included reviewing the Senior Phase curriculum when the new National Qualifications were bedded in.
4. A research project was therefore scoped out in 2018, which aimed to develop a clear understanding around how headteachers feel about their capacity, skill and confidence in developing the curriculum to ensure effective learning and teaching. The first stage of the research – this report – sought to gather the views and experiences of headteachers in secondary schools across Scotland. The second phase of the research is proposed to be a qualitative study that explores the key themes of this research in further detail with teachers, parents and students.
5. Separately, the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee have been carrying out an inquiry into subject choices in 2019, specifically the “extent and basis for narrowing of availability of subject choices”. The inquiry report is due to be published on Monday 16 September and this report will form part of our response to the Committee’s report.
6. DFM has also agreed to a review of the Senior Phase, announced earlier this year, following the debate on subject choice in May, which received the backing of the Parliament. A practitioner led review, with input from the OECD team, will help us better understand how the curriculum is being implemented in schools and identify areas we might seek to modify to ensure the best standard of education for our pupils. This research will feed into the work of the Review.

The Research

7. An online survey of headteachers was commissioned by Scottish Government and undertaken by Rocket Science. The overall aim of the survey was to provide information on the perspectives of headteachers in implementing Senior Phase curriculum.
8. The survey was open to all secondary school headteachers between 31 May and 28 June 2019. A total of 159 secondary headteacher responses (45% response rate) formed the basis of this report. The respondents were broadly representative of secondary schools in Scotland, including size of school, urban/rural location, and areas of relative deprivation.

Key Findings

9. Key findings are summarised below in relation to survey themes.

Headteacher views

10. The majority (85%) of headteachers that responded feel they are achieving an “integrated, progressive and coherent experience for young people in the Senior Phase”.

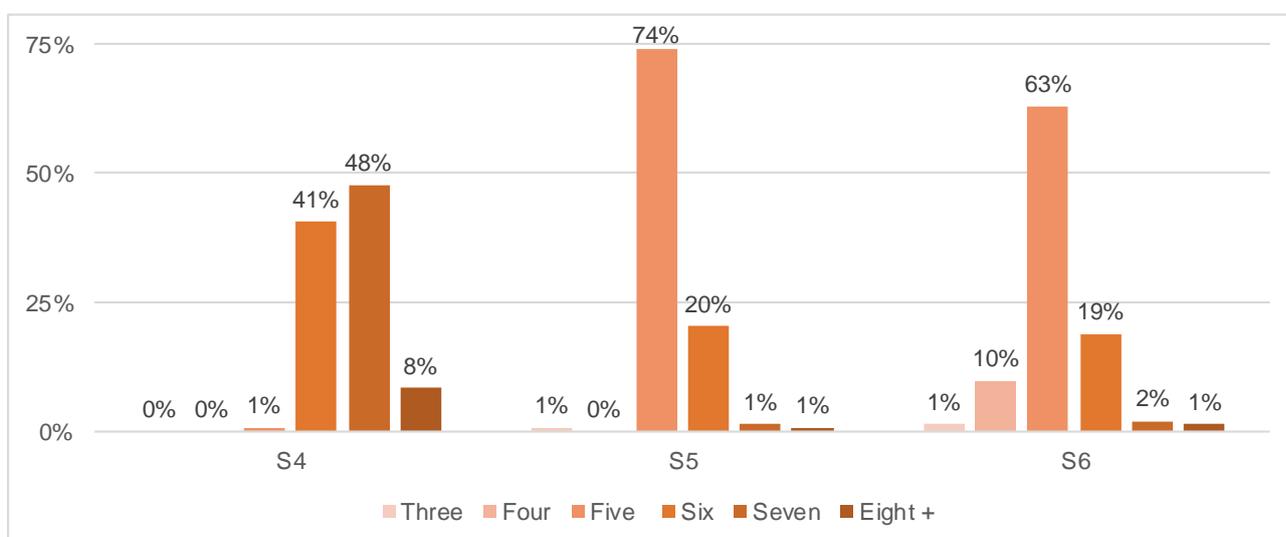
11. Three main factors were identified as important in helping headteachers develop a Senior Phase that meets the needs of all young people: the support and insights of staff; the commitment of partners with whom they had established relationships to help develop/deliver the Senior Phase; and, the insights and expectations of young people. The main factors which headteachers felt were a constraint in developing the Senior Phase were timetabling pressures and resource constraints.

12. The majority (77%) of headteachers that responded are very confident or confident that their school provides a sufficient variety of learning pathways to meet the needs of all their young people across the Senior Phase. A majority (88%) also felt they had sufficient autonomy to determine the pathways that their school offers in the Senior Phase.

Course choices

13. The number of course choices that young people can select varies across S4, S5 and S6 (see figure below). While headteachers were asked to state how many course choices (qualifications/awards) their young people can select at S4, S5, and S6, they were not asked to indicate the types of courses this may include, or how many their young people actually chose.

Number of course choices (qualification/awards) that young people can select at each stage of the Senior Phase (BASE: 143 responses).



14. Almost all schools accommodated requests for more or fewer course choices by offering flexibility, sometimes in the form of individualised timetables.

15. Schools offered a wide range of courses and qualifications, including college provision (93% of schools at S5), Duke of Edinburgh Award (91% of schools at S4), Foundation Apprenticeship (94% at S5), and Saltire Awards (69% at S6).
16. Over half of headteachers started planning for the Senior Phase when young people are in S2. The rationale for starting to prepare for transition in S2 was that it gave young people (and staff) enough time to consider and refine their choices for the Senior Phase while not narrowing down the focus of the BGE too early.

Transition from BGE to Senior Phase

17. Overall, 90% of headteachers felt they were able to mostly or completely ensure continuity of learning between the BGE and the Senior Phase. A variety of factors helped to ensure continuity, including: subject choice discussions; tracking of progress; and profiling and parental engagement.

Choosing courses

18. Young people have a number of resources that they can draw on to help shape their Senior Phase, with pastoral support discussions being seen as the most useful opportunity for learners.

Partnerships

19. Participants were asked about their school's partnerships with a number of different educational establishments and organisations. The majority of Headteachers have established long-term partnerships with colleges (95%) as well as employers (75%) in order to develop their Senior Phase curriculum. In almost all cases, the partnerships that have been developed are long-term partnerships, with the exception of those with 'Schools in other countries' where most have been short-term.

Outcomes and measuring success

20. Headteachers identified reviewing and refining the current curriculum, enhancing the Senior Phase offer, and increasing partnership working as their priorities for further developing Senior Phase.

Policy Handling and Communications

21. The report offers insights into headteachers' views on the implementation of the Senior Phase in their schools, showing the breadth and flexibility that the curriculum offers. The research focuses on a wider view of Senior Phase than the Committee Inquiry which focuses on subject choice. This research will also form an important starting point for the proposed review of the Senior Phase; the second phase of the research will focus in more detail on the key findings in this report.
22. We are in touch with communications colleagues and will provide lines to take in advance of publication.

Next Steps

23. The draft report is being finalised and it is proposed that it will be published on 25 September. This will allow the DFM to include the research in his keynote speech at the Scottish Learning Festival. We are liaising with Comms and SPADs on this proposal.
24. Alongside the report, the data tables from the survey will also be published (see Annex A). The data tables will provide further insight into headteachers' responses by the characteristics of their school (such as SIMD and urban/rural classification). This is being published in response to feedback from the Senior Phase Research Advisory Group on the need for and usefulness of this evidence. Some of these cross-tabulations will present results based on a small number of respondents, therefore supporting commentary will advise caution in making generalisations based on these data.
25. The publication of the headteacher survey will be the first phase in a wider research project on the Senior Phase. Phase 2 includes a qualitative phase of research, exploring in further detail the experiences of Senior Phase from the perspectives of teachers, young people and parents. This research is planned to be commissioned later in 2019. This work will support/ feed into the review of the Senior Phase curriculum as referred to by DFM in Parliament in May. This is currently being scoped by policy colleagues.

Action

26. The DFM is asked to note our intention to publish this report on **Wednesday 25 September** at 9.30am. A response by **20 September** would allow for the publication to be published on 25 September and be included in the DFMs keynote speech at the Scottish Learning Festival.
27. Officials are happy to discuss any aspect of the publication.

[Redact 38(1)(b)] Learning Analysis ([Redact 38(1)(b)])