

# **Scotland's Curriculum: Into the Future: Implementation framework for the OECD's 2021 review of Curriculum for Excellence**

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## **Scotland's Curriculum: Into the Future: Implementation framework for the OECD's 2021 review of Curriculum for Excellence**

This paper sets out a framework for how we will address the recommendations in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, '[Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future](#)'. This will include using the analysis and advice set out in Professor Stobart's working paper, '[Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland](#)'.

### **Introduction**

As a society, our ambition is for a Scotland where children and young people receive the best possible educational experience, and are able to realise their aspirations. As set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), every child has a right to education (article 28) and that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full as well as encouraging the child's respect for human rights, for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment (article 29). These fundamental rights underpin the inclusive approach to education and the curriculum in Scotland, and are the guiding principles under which we as a nation consider education policy.

The Scottish Government commissioned the OECD to provide a rigorous 'health check' of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and published the [remit](#) for the review in February 2020. The OECD, reporting in June 2021, found wide support for CfE and stated that Scotland's curriculum "continues to be a bold and widely supported initiative, and its design offers the flexibility needed to improve student learning further." Professor Stobart describes CfE as a "pioneering example of 21st-century curriculum reform" and highlighted that Scotland's curriculum continues to be viewed internationally as "an inspiring example equated with good curriculum practice". The OECD also identified areas for review and improvement.

In setting out next steps with the OECD's recommendations it is critical to recognise that the recommendations were made to "support Scotland as it further enhances CfE to achieve its potential for learners". The OECD also commented that "its [CfE's] design offers the flexibility needed for a few adjustments to further improve the learners' journey, if schools and teachers receive adequate support from the system". This is not about wholesale change, but is about a process of continuous improvement, to learn from the approach to implementation over the last 10 years, and make adjustments where necessary.

Against that background, this framework is intended to set out the key next steps and initial actions in how the OECD's recommendations and Professor Stobart's working paper will be taken forward. Scottish Government will co-ordinate this work, but recognises the different responsibilities and accountabilities in the education system, including the statutory responsibility of local authorities for the provision of education, and the need to work together to build consensus, drawing together leaders and learners from all parts of the system to develop a mandate for change which has wide support and which can be acted on by those who have agency in particular areas.

## **Context**

The OECD's report into CfE was originally commissioned before the Covid-19 pandemic, and, as well as the learning from the last 18 months, the OECD report, and our own [report on the contribution of education to Scotland's COVID Recovery](#), we have benefitted from a number of other recent reports which make a series of recommendations for improvement. These include:

- [The Additional Support for Learning Review](#) (June 2020)
- [International Council of Education Advisers: 2<sup>nd</sup> Formal Report](#) (December 2020)
- [Scottish Government: Equity Audit](#) (January 2021).
- [Scottish Government: Closing the poverty-related attainment gap: a report on progress 2016-2021](#) (March 2021)
- [Audit Scotland: Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education](#) (March 2021)

A number of other ongoing programmes and reviews will interact with the work on curriculum, qualifications and assessment reform. These include, but are not limited to:

- Skills Development Scotland's Careers Review
- The Promise
- Review of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs)
- Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review
- Scottish Funding Council's Review of Tertiary Education and Research
- Ongoing curricular reviews in relation to LGBT education, rights education and race equality and anti-racist education.

This work sits alongside the work being led by Professor Ken Muir and announced by the Cabinet Secretary on 22 June in response to the OECD's recommendations about structural reform. Professor Muir is currently undertaking [a consultation](#) to inform his recommendations. While the consultation is focused around decisions already taken by the Scottish Government on the reform of Education Scotland and replacement of SQA, including in respect of the roles and responsibilities for curriculum and assessment and future functions and structures, it also invites views on wider aspects around the future of Scottish education, in order to help set the context for his work. The responses to Professor Muir's consultation will clearly represent a useful body of evidence which will be used where relevant to support the reform agenda as a whole. He is due to report in early 2022.

## **Approach**

Improving the opportunities and outcomes for children and young people is at the heart of this work. That is why it is fundamentally important that we create the spaces for children and young people to tell us what their priorities and ambitions are. We are establishing the Children and Young People's Education Council, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, to ensure children and young people can discuss these issues directly with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard as policies develop is critical; the process must include children and young people with a range of lived experience, including early years, those with Additional Support Needs and from minority ethnic backgrounds.

In addition, the needs of each individual child and young person can only be identified and met if those who work closely with them day in and day out are enabled and empowered to make decisions about their learning, support and health and wellbeing. The Scottish Government remains committed to working collaboratively and in partnership with local government and Education Scotland in support of furthering the empowerment of schools, settings, teachers and practitioners. We will work directly with teachers and schools to build local, regional and national communities of practitioners to lead, shape and design reform work, to ensure that the empowerment agenda is a common central thread throughout educational policy.

The Scottish Education Council, also chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, is a key senior leadership forum for education in Scotland. Alongside other leadership groups, such as the Curriculum and Assessment Board and the Strategic Board for Teacher Education, it has the responsibility of ensuring that all work taken forward in education continues to centre on the right of every child to an education which fully develops their personality, talents and abilities.

The governance landscape for this work is provided below.

In developing detailed plans for what happens next we will take a collaborative approach using the table below as a starting point. We will take the time to work with partners and stakeholders to develop the mandate for change which will help ensure all parts of the education system are involved and aligned. These detailed plans will be reflected in the 2022 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan which will be published in December 2021.

Professor Muir has established an Expert Panel and Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group in support of [his work](#), and is working with Children's Parliament, Scottish Youth Parliament and Together to support children and young people's engagement. Professor Muir will report to the Cabinet Secretary in early 2022.

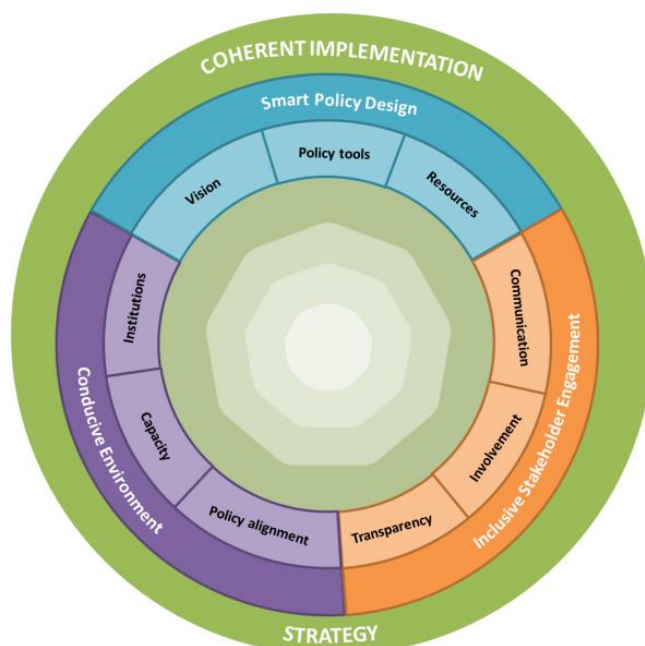
The full set of OECD recommendations and a summary of Professor Stobart's conclusions from his working paper is included in the Annex. In setting out the framework for implementation, next steps and actions have been grouped according to key themes arising from the OECD's report, namely:

- Re-assess the vision of CfE
- Agree measurement and evaluation approach
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Align assessment and qualifications
- Increase curriculum development capacity

In addition the OECD placed strong emphasis on implementation, communication and stakeholder engagement, which is considered below.

## **Implementation**

The OECD itself set out a recommended approach to the implementation of their recommendations, which has been accepted. The OECD says Scotland should: Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation. Building on the system's existing strengths, Scotland should consider how to take on board the recommendations in this report as a coherent package rather than individual policy actions for the next steps.



Source: OECD, An implementation framework for effective change in schools<sup>1</sup>

The framework the OECD sets out recognises the complexities of education policy and recommends balancing traditional implementation processes with more bottom-up approaches that leave room for co-construction and local adaptation. It suggests that to accomplish education change in schools and settings, a coherent, actionable and well-communicated implementation strategy that engages stakeholders early on and takes into account the environment as part of the policy design process, is needed.

The Scottish Government will use this framework to work with partners and stakeholders to develop a coherent and long term approach, accepting the OECD's view that implementation is the key factor in the success or failure of translating specific policy objectives into concrete education changes, leading to improvement in schools and settings.

The approach to implementation will also take in the OECD's recommendations about purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement (in particular students) [recommendation 2.1] and a coherent communication strategy to support developments of CfE [recommendation 2.3]. The important roles and views of teachers/practitioners, pupils, parents/carers in this is particularly acknowledged.

We will continue to engage with front line teachers through the national Teacher Panel - see section of Governance and Implementation Framework below - and other routes including the professional associations, to ensure the voices of those who deliver education to young people continue to be heard. The role and involvement of the profession is central to this work, ensuring teachers and practitioners alongside pupils are engaged and included.

Wider and more in depth engagement with learners has been growing in recent months and years, culminating in the commitment to create the Children and Young People's Education Council. This is in the process of being established and we have sought to build on the learning from a number of youth engagement panels which have taken place during the pandemic. As

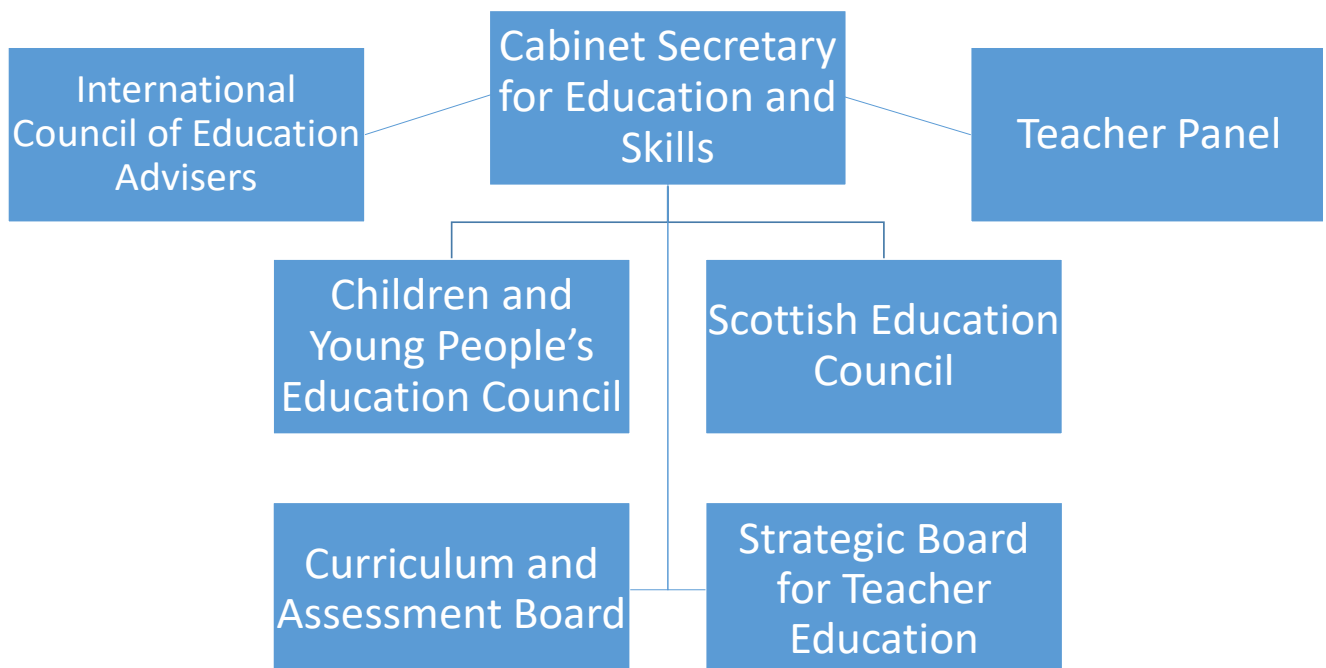
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/4fd4113f-en.pdf?expires=1634208292&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=A0C9B3C1CF92C0CF2F6879672D17561A>

we develop the approach to implementation of this framework and will work with partners to support this type of engagement at all levels. We already have guidance in place to support schools and local authorities to engage and respond to their learners, parents and teachers. We will continue to ensure this is fit for purpose and seek feedback on opportunities for improvement.

### **Governance**

Governance of this work will be taken through the key groups set out above, namely the re-established Scottish Education Council and the new Children and Young People’s Education Council. Both groups will have parity and will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The Curriculum and Assessment Board and Strategic Board for Teacher Education will continue to have a key role in terms of offering advice and guidance to Ministers and feeding in to the Scottish Education Council. Their role and/or that of other existing or new Boards or Groups in terms of the Children and Young People’s Education Council will be considered once it is established.

The Teacher Panel has been in place since 2016, providing a quarterly forum for teachers and head teachers to discuss key developments in education and to share their experiences and expertise with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. As part of our actions to strengthen and build on the voice of front line teachers and head teachers we will consult with the Panel and other stakeholders about how to strengthen and expand the role of the Teacher Panel in relation to this work. Through Education Scotland, we will extend its networks of professional learning communities to ensure wider participation and engagement, creating regular touch points and co-construction with practitioners.



## OECD Implementation Framework

The following sets out the key next steps and actions from the OECD's report and Professor Stobart's working paper. These will be led and further developed by Scottish Government with Partners: Scottish Education Council and Children and Young People's Education Council, Curriculum and Assessment Board, Strategic Board for Teacher Education, Education Scotland and SQA. Notwithstanding Professor Muir's ongoing work, the expertise in Education Scotland and the SQA will continue to be needed in support of this and other ongoing work until such time that a successor body/bodies are in place to fulfil these functions. A key principle underpinning all of the work will be to embed throughout it the empowerment agenda, working in collaboration with teachers, practitioners, children and young people and parents and carers.

Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
<b>Re-assess the vision of CfE</b>	<p><b>1.1.</b> Re-assess CfE's aspirational vision against emerging trends in education</p> <p><b>1.3.</b> Adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of CfE</p> <p><b>2.3.</b> Structure a coherent communication strategy to support developments of CfE</p> <p><b>3.4.</b> Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review</p> <p><b>4.1</b> Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation</p>	<p>Convene and facilitate dialogue to re-visit and assess the <a href="#">2019 refreshed narrative</a> for Scotland's curriculum. This will be informed by user feedback, Professor Muir's consultation, and learning from the pandemic.</p> <p>This work will support initial considerations for development of a review cycle for the curriculum (including the four capacities and the eight curricular areas), as set out in recommendation 3.4. These reviews will take account of the OECD commentary on areas such as the role of knowledge and skills.</p> <p>This work will also help shape work on the alignment of assessment and qualifications.</p> <p>Co-create a new communications strategy for Curriculum for Excellence with teachers, practitioners, children and young people, and parents/carers.</p>	<p>November 2021 to March 2022</p> <p>Beginning April 2022</p> <p>By Autumn 2022</p>

Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
<p><b>Clarify roles and responsibilities</b></p>	<p><b>2.1.</b> Ensure stable, purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement with CfE</p> <p><b>2.2.</b> Revise the division of responsibilities for CfE</p> <p><b>3.2.</b> Simplify policies and institutions for clarity and coherence</p> <p><b>4.1</b> Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation</p>	<p>Professor Muir’s work will clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to the functions of Education Scotland and SQA, and their relationship to the education system as a whole.</p> <p>Further to this, work will be undertaken to agree the division of responsibilities for CfE, including responsibilities for its strategic direction and on-going review.</p> <p>This will include the central role and importance of empowering schools, teachers, practitioners and children and young people.</p> <p>Establish the Children and Young People’s Education Council with the right support, input and expertise to ensure it is an exemplar of practice in engaging children and young people in policy development, and can contribute effectively as a key part of education governance in Scotland.</p> <p>Consider what further activities are needed to ensure that we are able to explore and understand the views of a wider selection of children and young people in Scotland through survey and similar techniques.</p>	<p>Findings available in early 2022</p> <p>Early 2022 onwards</p> <p>Established early 2022</p> <p>October 2021 to January 2022, with activity to take place before the end of the academic year</p>
<p><b>Align assessment and qualifications</b></p>	<p><b>1.2.</b> Find a better balance between breadth and depth of learning throughout CfE</p> <p><b>1.3.</b> Adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of CfE</p>	<p>Develop a shared purpose and principles for Scotland’s assessment and qualifications system.</p> <p>Develop proposals and recommendations for how the design of the current system could be changed in order to realise the shared vision.</p>	<p>November 2021 to February 2022</p> <p>February 2022 to August 2022</p>



Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
	<p><b>3.3.</b> Align curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation to deliver on the commitment of Building the Curriculum 5</p> <p><b>and</b></p> <p>Professor Stobart's Analysis</p>	<p>Detailed plans will be developed as needed for design, development and delivery of new qualifications.</p> <p>The advice set out in Building the Curriculum 5 and in other relevant sources will be reviewed and updated as necessary.</p> <p>We remain committed to teacher professional judgement as the means of assessing progress in the BGE, and will consider how we can better support that and the Achievement of CfE Levels data in future. National standardised assessments will continue to have a role to play in this. We will also explore options for a sample-survey based approach to assessing progress across the four CfE capacities (see below). This work will be informed by the planned consultation on possible changes to the National Improvement Framework measures of progress.</p> <p>Revised measures of progress and proposals for supporting teacher professional judgement and system evaluation will be included in the National Improvement Framework from December 2022 onwards.</p>	<p>Subsequent detailed design of new qualifications will take place between September 2022 and August 2024.</p> <p>The annual review of the National Improvement Framework is underway and the 2022 NIF and Improvement Plan will be published in December 2021. A short-life sub-group of the Curriculum and Assessment Board will be established in January 2022 to explore options for a sample-based survey and better support for teacher professional judgement and provide recommendations by March 2022.</p> <p>The consultation on changes to the NIF measures will begin in January 2022 and</p>

Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
			conclude in September 2022.
<p><b>Increase curriculum development capacity</b></p>	<p><b>1.4.</b> Continue building curricular capacity at various levels of the system using research</p> <p><b>3.1.</b> Provide dedicated time to lead, plan and support CfE at the school level</p>	<p>Take in to account the forthcoming Regional Improvement Collaboratives' review and consider their current activities around enhancing curricular design capability.</p> <p>Develop and agree next steps to further school empowerment with teachers, practitioners and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Review the current role of measures and indicators associated with Curriculum for Excellence with a view to ensuring an appropriate balance between quality assurance and improvement within learning with sustainable workloads for teachers.</p> <p>Work with the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) to agree how the commitment to reduce class contact time for teachers by 90 minutes per week will be delivered.</p> <p>Work with local government to deliver the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party's shared policy programme commitment to recruit 3,500 additional teachers and 500 classroom assistants over this parliamentary term.</p> <p>Evaluate current support and access for teachers and practitioners to professional development for curriculum design and development.</p>	<p>Beginning December 2021 to June 2022</p> <p>Early 2022 onwards</p> <p>This will be taken forward as part of the evaluation system work below.</p> <p>Discussions ongoing</p> <p>From January 2022</p> <p>From January 2022</p>

Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
		Review and clarify current national guidance on breadth and depth of learning. Exemplify good practice in the ways in which different schools achieve breadth and depth of learning across their curriculum, which meets the needs and aspirations of learners.	From January 2022
<b>Agree measurement and evaluation approach</b>	<p><b>2.1.</b> Ensure stable, purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement with CfE</p> <p><b>2.3.</b> Structure a coherent communication strategy to support developments of CfE</p> <p><b>3.4.</b> Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review</p> <p><b>4.1.</b> Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation</p>	<p>The data and research required to inform an evaluation system and to support the systematic approach to curriculum review will be explored, via an evaluation of existing measures and an assessment of a requirement of any new data and measures.</p> <p>Specifically, we will establish a short-life sub-group of the Curriculum and Assessment Board to explore options for introducing a sample-based survey with the potential to gather data across the four capacities and how this would align with the data we collect at present. The sub-group will be specifically tasked with considering the workload implications for staff of any potential survey.</p> <p>As with the action in response to 3.3 above, this work will be informed by the planned consultation on possible changes to the National Improvement Framework measures of progress.</p> <p>The outcome of this work will be reflected in the National Improvement Framework from December 2022 onwards.</p> <p>Communications and stakeholder involvement strategies will be refreshed, including as part of the</p>	<p>February to September 2022</p> <p>As above, the short-life sub-group will be established in January 2022 and asked to make recommendations by March 2022.</p> <p>The consultation on NIF measures will run from February to September 2022.</p>

Theme	OECD Recommendations	Key next steps and initial actions	Timing
		<p data-bbox="976 177 1659 245">new communications strategy for Curriculum for Excellence, above.</p> <p data-bbox="976 288 1742 507">We will consult with the Teacher Panel and other stakeholders about how to strengthen and expand the role of the Teacher Panel, and teacher and head teacher voice, in relation to this and the range of other work in this framework, linking with the empowerment agenda.</p>	<p data-bbox="1767 288 2056 320">Early 2022 onwards</p>

## **Annex A: Recommendations from OECD report and summary of conclusions from Professor Stobart's working paper**

### **Recommendations from the OECD report - Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future**

#### **1. Balance Curriculum for Excellence so students can fully benefit from a coherent learning experience from 3 to 18 years**

**1.1 Re-assess CfE's aspirational vision against emerging trends in education to take account of evolutions in education and society:** Scotland should consider updates to some of its vision's core elements and their implications for practice, in particular, the role of knowledge in CfE; and define indicators aligned to the vision to help understand students' progress across all four capacities set out in CfE.

**1.2 Find a better balance between breadth and depth of learning throughout CfE to deliver Scotland's commitment to providing all learners with a rich learning experience throughout school education:** Scotland could consider how the design of CfE can better help learners consolidate a common base of knowledge, skills and attitudes by the end of BGE, and nurture and hone this base for them to progress seamlessly through Senior Phase and the choices it offers.

**1.3 Adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of CfE:** Scotland could consider adapting the pedagogical and assessment practices and the structure of learning pathways in the Senior Phase to enhance learners' experience of upper-secondary education and help them develop CfE's four capacities continuously.

**1.4 Continue building curricular capacity at various levels of the system using research** by developing the environment of curriculum design support around schools, including in supporting exchange and collaboration between practitioners for curriculum design and experimentation within and across schools; and collaboration between schools and universities.

#### **2. Combine effective collaboration with clear roles and responsibilities**

**2.1 Ensure stable, purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement with CfE:** System leaders at national and local levels could continue encouraging the involvement of stakeholders (and in particular, students) with CfE by better structuring each engagement initiative they offer, clarifying its purpose, designing it accordingly, and letting stakeholder input inform decision making.

**2.2 Revise the division of responsibilities for CfE:** System leaders and stakeholders could revise the current allocation of responsibility for CfE, including responsibilities for its strategic direction, its reviews and updates, and the response to schools' needs of support with curriculum issues. The revised allocation should be stable over time to fulfil Scotland's commitment to shared ownership of CfE.

**2.3 Structure a coherent communication strategy to support developments of CfE:** System leaders, with the Learning Directorate and Education Scotland at the forefront,

could develop a communication strategy in support of CfE's next developments and collaborate with practitioners, scholars and other CfE stakeholders as they do so.

### **3. Consolidate institutional policy processes for effective change**

**3.1 Provide dedicated time to lead, plan and support CfE at the school level:** In support of the next phase of development of CfE, Scotland could consider the provision of additional dedicated and ring-fenced time for all teachers, for curriculum planning, for monitoring of student achievement and in support of moderation of assessment outcomes.

**3.2 Simplify policies and institutions for clarity and coherence:** To align the institutional structures with clear ownership of CfE, Scotland could explore assigning leadership and development responsibilities for curriculum (and perhaps assessment) to a specialist stand-alone agency; and consider refreshing the remit of an inspectorate of education regarding CfE.

**3.3 Align curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation to deliver on the commitment of Building the Curriculum 5:** Scotland could first identify modes of student assessment that could be used in school and external settings at Senior Phase levels, in alignment with the four capacities and CfE philosophy; and second, re-develop a sample-based evaluation system to collect robust and reliable data necessary to support curriculum reviews and decision making.

**3.4 Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review:** Scotland could consider establishing a systematic curriculum review cycle with a planned timeframe and specific review agenda, led by the specialist stand-alone agency.

### **4. Lead the next steps for Curriculum for Excellence with a long-term view**

**4.1 Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation:** Building on the system's existing strengths, Scotland should consider how to take on board the recommendations in this report as a coherent package rather than individual policy actions for the next steps.

### **Summary of conclusions from Professor Stobart's paper**

Professor Stobart's paper outlines six options that Scotland may wish to consider as part of a wider dialogue on the future of qualifications and assessment. These include:

- Exploring the replacement of examinations at age 16 by a school graduation certificate;
- Developing a more resilient upper secondary assessment system;
- Seeking better alignment of assessment with curriculum and pedagogy through broadening the forms of assessment;
- Reconfiguring and increasing the role of school based assessment and adapting the central moderation system;
- Systematically investigating students' perceptions and views of assessment arrangements and
- Further developing the role of vocational qualifications in broadening the curriculum.



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