

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	EDU/17/23

Committee:	Education
Date:	7 September 2023
Report Title:	National Discussion & Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment
Report By:	Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates members on two substantive reports on education policy recently published by the Scottish Government:
- All Learners in Scotland Matter: The National Discussion on Education Final Report and,
 - It's Our Future: Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the content of the update report on education reform in Scotland.
 - ii. Approve the actions set out as Next Steps in section 7 of this report, to support engagement opportunities of our teachers with the information set out in the National Reports.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations this report at this time; however future resource implications could include:
- Resource for adequate sustained funding to provide staffing and specialist resources to achieve commitment to inclusivity and meet the needs of each learner, including those with additional support needs.
 - Digital upskilling and digital transformation across the Scottish education system, is urgent priority.
 - Expertise and judgement of education profession, including deep curricular knowledge and access to curriculum-based resources, working with support staff and specialists is vital
- 3.2 Legal - There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - There are no community-based implications for The Highland Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - There are no climate change issues arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk - There are no risk implications requiring an addition or amendment to The Highland Council risk register arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no health and safety implications arising from the recommendations this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications for The Highland Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has recently published the findings of two separate reviews into Scottish Education: the outcome National Discussion on the future direction for Scottish Education and the recommendations made by the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment. Following on from the release of these reports, the Cabinet Secretary for Education has put a pause on the proposed reforms to allow further engagement with the teaching profession regarding the outlined recommendations.
- 4.2 This report updates members on the proposals within the two substantive reports on national education policy and on the plans to facilitate Highland teachers' engagement in the Scottish Governments consultation exercise on these reports.

5. All Learners in Scotland Matter: Our National Discussion

- 5.1 The National Discussion was carried out following a recommendation from Professor Ken Muir's report: "Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education" which stated we should hold a national discussion to establish a compelling, consensual, and renewed vision for the future of Scottish education that:
- Puts the learner at the centre; and,
 - Is as inclusive as possible.
- 5.2 The report also noted that it had been 20 years since Scotland last had a national debate on education. The National Discussion was launched in Autumn 2022 and was titled "Let's Talk Scottish Education".
- 5.3 A summary of the findings of the National Discussion can be found in **Appendix 1**. The full report can be found at [All Learners in Scotland Matter - national discussion on education: final report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-policies/all-learners-in-scotland-matter-national-discussion-on-education-final-report-gov.scot). This report provides an overview of the National Discussion and outlines the vision, values and the high-level Call to Action (C2A) based upon all the evidence collected. This summary concludes by focusing on next steps.

5.4 **All Learners in Scotland Matter: Vision and Values**

The visions and values outlined in the report for Scottish Education are provided below:

Vision Statement for a Future of Scottish Education

- Children and young people are at the heart of education in Scotland. The Scottish education system values collaborative partnerships that engage all learners, the people who work within and with the education system, parents, and carers to ensure that all learners in Scotland matter.
- All learners are supported in inclusive learning environments which are safe, welcoming, caring, and proactively address any barriers to learning and inequities that exist or arise. Education in Scotland nurtures the unique talents of all learners ensuring their achievement, progress, and well-being.
- Each child and young person in Scotland has high-quality learning experiences which respect their rights and represents the diversity of who they are and the communities they live in.
- Each child and young person receives great teaching, resources, and support for joyful learning that builds their confidence and equips them to be successful and to contribute in their life, work, and world, so they know how much they matter.

Guiding Values for a future Scottish education System

Ambitious – The Scottish education system will be ambitious by having high expectations for all learners and enabling each child and young person to develop and achieve their ambitions.

Inclusive – The Scottish education system will value, respect, recognise, and represent the diversity of all children and young people, and provide equitable educational experiences and opportunities for all learners.

Supportive – A hallmark of the Scottish education system will be to engage each child, young person, and adult meaningfully and appropriately in an education process that provides the necessary supports for all learners to progress, achieve, and realise their personal ambitions

5.5 **A Call to Action (C2A)**

A Call to Action (C2A) has been formulated based on the strongest themes and views arising from the National Discussion data. This C2A aims to reflect both realism and pragmatism while also signalling what will be needed now and in the future to safeguard the learning and life chances of all children and young people in Scotland. The high-level summary of the C2A outlined below:

- Focus on high-quality teaching and learning, with a range of appropriate assessments.
- Different learner pathways and alternative routes to success.
- Adequate sustained funding to provide staffing and specialist resources to achieve commitment to inclusivity and meet the needs of each learner, including those with additional support needs.
- Appreciate diversity of people and places, and reflect in the curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and represented in the education workforce.

- Safe and inclusive cultures that nurture respectful relationships and address discrimination and harassment.
- Expertise and judgement of education profession, including deep curricular knowledge and access to curriculum-based resources, working with support staff and specialists is vital.
- Continued need to proactively learn about and support mental, emotional, and physical health and healthy relationships.
- Provide whole-school approaches to nurture safe learning spaces and anti-bullying practices.
- Regular curriculum review process established to ensure curriculum remains fit for purpose and reflects contemporary learner needs.
- Harness abilities, skills and talents of all children and young people.
- Break down academic/vocational divide and offer broader set of assessment and qualification options.
- Formally recognise and reward achievements of all learners.
- Digital upskilling and digital transformation across the Scottish education system, is urgent priority.
- Attention to maximising existing skills and infrastructure available to further build digital capacity is essential.
- Build relationships by listening to the views of children and young people.
- Putting the needs of children and young people at the heart of the system, engaging parents/carers, families, and communities.
- Education profession leading the way forward with professional expertise and judgement informing decisions and actions.

6. Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

- 6.1 The recommendations made by the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment were published in the report, 'It's Our Future: Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment'. A summary of the findings can be found in **Appendix 2**. The full report can be found at [It's Our Future - Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/collections/documents/ItsOurFuture-IndependentReviewofQualificationsandAssessment-report-gov.scot.pdf)

This review was initiated in October 2021 by the then, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and was established for four main reasons:

- Society is changing very quickly, and Scotland should look to the future and consider whether our current qualifications and assessment system is fit for a potentially very different future.
- The international COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted dissatisfaction with Scotland's qualifications. Following the cancellation of examinations in 2020 and 2021, and the alternative approaches taken to National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications, there was public concern about fairness and widespread dissatisfaction with results and perceptions of inequity.
- The evidence emerging from two OECD reports (OECD, 2021, Stobart, 2021) indicated a need for change in the Senior Phase.
- A longer-term dissatisfaction within Scotland about differences between the original intentions for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) qualifications and learners' experiences of them.

The Independent Review is concerned with Senior Phase qualifications in schools, colleges, and wider educational settings. The focus is predominately learners aged 15-18 in all educational settings.

6.2 The review found almost universal support for change to the way qualifications and assessment currently operate in the senior phase. Recommendations in the final report focus on the introduction of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA) with three elements: Personal Pathway, Programmes of Learning and Project Learning. The Review recommends that the Diploma should be the graduation certificate offered in all settings where Senior Phase education is provided. All learners should be offered the chance to experience learning in all elements of the Diploma and that these should be entitlements.



The following sections will outline the key proposals for the Scottish Diploma of Achievement:

6.2.1 **‘Programmes of Learning’**

The final report states that learners would continue to study in-depth individual areas of the curriculum, general subjects, and vocational, technical, and professional qualifications. These would remain a fundamental part of qualifications. Where currently qualifications are graded, e.g., Highers, Advanced Highers, they would continue to be graded. Courses would be designed in modules. As learners complete modules, they would build credit. Where a qualification has an examination, the credit learners have built through the course would be combined with result from the final examination to obtain the final grade. This would reduce the risk for learners of performing only a single day event. A wider range of methods of assessment would be used and methods would be appropriate to the individual programme. The number of examinations in the Senior Phase would be reduced. The review recommends that external assessment in S4 should be removed.

6.2.2 **What is the ‘Personal Pathway’?**

The central focus of the Personal Pathway is reflection on learning, whether that be learning in school, in college or in the community. The purpose of the Personal Pathway is to give learners the opportunity to personalise their qualification profile by selecting aspects of their experiences that reflect their interests, the contributions they make to society and their career aspirations in employment and to discuss these in a reflective way. The focus of the Personal Pathway is not on the number of experiences but on what an individual has learnt through an experience. The Personal Pathway would not be graded but would be subject to authentication processes. The Personal Pathway would be owned by the learner.

6.2.3 **What is ‘Project Learning’?**

In Project Learning, learners would have the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills they have developed in their Programmes of Learning to tackle a significant question or problem that is important to them by undertaking a Project. For some learners, the focus could be on a global challenge, for example, climate change, migration, or social justice. Projects may be undertaken individually or in groups, but assessment would be individual. Project Learning would not be graded but will be linked to SCQF levels each with a different number of credit points.

6.2.4 **What else does the Review Recommend?**

- The Review also recommends that there should be a digital profile for all learners which allows them to record personal achievements, identify and plan future learning.
- In a bid to strengthen parity of esteem between different types of qualifications there should be a move to use the terms ‘SCQF level’ as the key descriptor followed by type of qualification. e.g., SCQF Level 6 – Higher.
- The information on learners’ achievements within the SDA, courses and projects should be aligned in Scottish Statistics on Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations and INSIGHT data.
- There are a number of recommendations on the change process and what has to happen if the Scottish Diploma of Achievement is to be developed successfully.
- The Scottish Government should convene a cross sector commission to develop shared value position on the future of Artificial Intelligence in education.

6.2.5 **Implementation of the Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA)**

The report recommends introducing the SDA in three phases. The report says implementation should begin with raising awareness of what the SDA is and investing in professional learning for teachers, and end with the first cohort of students being awarded the diploma and, ultimately, there being “system-wide confidence” in the reforms.

The report says: “The introduction of the SDA should be in a series of three overlapping phases. The phases should: first, create the conditions to support successful change; second, make changes to create the new qualification; and third, embed the qualification across the system. Each phase should have a plan to support the enactment of ideas in practice in ways that empower communities. Resource implications should be clearly identified. The plan for the phased introduction of the diploma should be discussed and agreed by the start of session 2024-25.”

Implementing the Scottish Diploma of Achievement

Phase One: Creating the Conditions for Scottish Diploma of Achievement
(2023- 27)

Phase Two: Creating the Scottish Diploma of Achievement (2026-30)

Phase Three: Embedding the Scottish Diploma of Achievement (2028-32)

The report says “the phased introduction of the diploma should be discussed and agreed by the start of session 2024-25”.

The proposed three phases of implementation will mean that the first cohort of students will be awarded the Scottish Diploma of Achievement in the final phase, to run from 2028 to 2032.

7. Next steps

7.1 Engagement with teachers on the findings of the National Discussion

The Scottish Government with the support of ADES is currently seeking feedback from the teaching profession on the findings of the National Discussion. The National Discussion suggests short, medium, and long term actions will be required to deliver the recommendations of consultation. Teaching staff are being asked to identify their top priority for a short, a medium and a long-term action.

7.2 Engagement with teachers on reform to qualifications and assessment

The Scottish Government is also seeking to understand the views of teachers and other stakeholder in the proposed reform of qualifications and assessments in Scotland.

Teaching staff are being asked to consider the following questions:

- Are there recommendations that you believe are essential and should be prioritised over others? and if so – which ones are they?
- Are there any recommendations which you strongly disagree with and why?
- How can you and college lecturers best be involved in the process of change going forward?

7.3 Teachers' feedback is being gathered by the Scottish Government based on the questions outlined above. Every school in Highland is being asked to provide time for staff to consider these questions on the first Inservice day in September. As per the guidance from the Scottish Government, schools with primary-aged children will be asked to focus more on the National Discussion questions and schools with secondary-aged young people to focus more on the qualification and assessment questions. In Highland, we intend to collate an overview of the responses from our schools to these questions. The collated responses will be shared with Members. Many of the priorities identified in the National discussion “A Call 2 Action” have been discussed/prioritised with an overarching theme within the Directorate plan.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Education & Learning

Date: 1 August 2023

Author: Fiona Grant, Head of Service Learning & Teaching

Background Papers:

The full report ‘All Learners in Scotland Matter – national discussion on education: final report’ can be found at:

[All Learners in Scotland Matter - national discussion on education: final report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

The full report 'It's Our Future – Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report' can be found at:

[It's Our Future - Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: report - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Appendices: Appendix 1 All Learners Matter – National Discussion Summary Report

Appendix 2 Independent Review of Qualifications & Assessment Summary

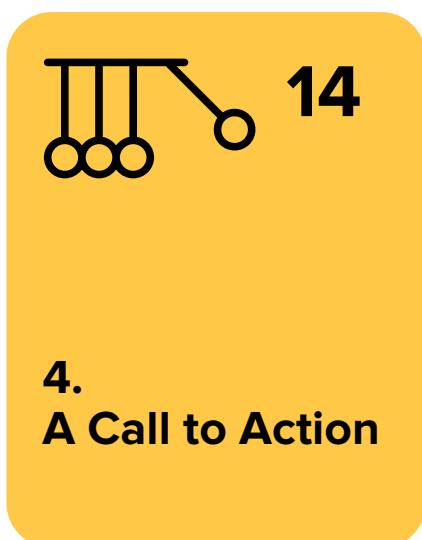
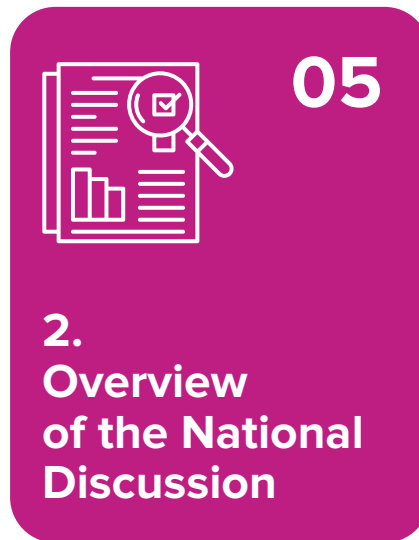
All Learners in Scotland Matter: Our National Discussion

A Summary Report



Professor Carol Campbell and Professor Alma Harris
(Independent Facilitators)

Contents





1.

Introduction

1. Introduction



1.1 The need for a National Discussion to establish a compelling, consensual and renewed vision for the future of Scottish education was highlighted in the Muir Review *Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education*¹. In that review, it was recommended that the National Discussion needed to be as inclusive as possible and not afford a “narrative privilege” to established education organisations. Acting on these recommendations, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) agreed to co-convene a National Discussion on the future of Scottish education.

1.2 We were invited to be Independent Facilitators of this National Discussion and commenced work in July 2022. This report provides an overview of the National Discussion and outlines the vision, values and the high-level Call to Action (C2A) based upon all the evidence collected. This summary concludes by focusing on next steps.

¹ [Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-at-the-centre-towards-a-future-vision-for-scottish-education/pages/1-introduction/)



2.

Overview of the National Discussion

2. Overview of the National Discussion



2.1 The National Discussion² on Education in Scotland was a generational opportunity for children, young people, and those who support them to have their voices heard concerning the future direction of Scottish Education. The central aim of the National Discussion was to produce a compelling and consensual vision for Scottish education accompanied by a Call to Action (C2A) that outlined the strategic steps to achieving that vision in practice.

2.2 As independent facilitators, we worked with a broad coalition of early years organisations, schools, other education organisations, community groups, third sector organisations, youth workers, parents' groups, education professional organisations, local authorities, and policy makers to engage all those involved in Scottish education. In designing the questions and engagement plans for the National Discussion, we consulted with more than a

hundred organisations dedicated to supporting and representing children and young people, as well as education partners and parent stakeholder groups. We kept in touch with these organisations throughout the National Discussion, offering the opportunity for further feedback and commentary.

2.3 The National Discussion was launched by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and COSLA Children and Young Spokesperson on the 21st of September 2022. This launch was followed by an intensive engagement phase that ran until the 5th of December 2022. In keeping with the recommendations of the Muir Review we ensured that the views of children and young people were at the heart of the National Discussion, not exclusively but primarily. We also sought the input of the adults who care for, represent, and support children and young

² [National Discussion Scottish Education – Scottish Government – Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/national-discussion-scottish-education)

people, including parents and carers, school leaders, teachers, other education practitioners and support staff (Appendix A).

2.4 Guiding the National Discussion was the central question: *“What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future and how do we make that a reality?”* We made every effort to ensure that the voices of children and young people who are not usually forthcoming in discussions or debates like this were included through specialist support groups or through their parents, carers, and teachers.

2.5 The depth and breadth of engagement in the National Discussion far exceeded our expectations. Over 38,000 people took part in the National Discussion (see Appendix B for an infographic of engagement statistics). In collaboration with the Scottish Government, an online survey was launched with ten key questions available in multiple community languages, in accessible formats and in an easy read version. A range of age-appropriate tailored discussion guides with further adapted National Discussion questions were produced by Education Scotland to help teachers, parents/carers and youth workers engage children and young people directly and for adults to also engage in facilitated discussions. A total of 5,671 responses were submitted to the National Discussion, including survey responses and open submissions in a range of formats. Of these, 232 group responses were received.

2.6 As Independent Facilitators, we participated in as many on-line and face to face sessions as possible. In total, there were 102 National Discussion events. We adopted an invitational, grassroots engagement approach to help ensure that the National Discussion was as inclusive as possible. We hosted public engagement events and participated in meetings hosted by organisations nationally,

regionally, and locally. We met face to face with key groups to extend our reach and to gather as much first-hand evidence as we could. A highly successful social media campaign resulted in 10 million unique social media users seeing the hashtag #TalkScottishEducation. There were 6,000 Twitter posts about the National Discussion.

2.7 All schools in Scotland were invited to take part in the National Discussion, using the age-appropriate facilitation guides. Online National Discussion assemblies and classes were provided by e-Sgoil for primary and secondary age pupils. Over 26,000 pupils and students participated in these online events which ensured that views of children and young people, throughout Scotland, were provided as part of the National Discussion.

2.8 Discussions with seldom-heard groups of children and young people were organised and we reached out in ways that reduced as many barriers to participation as possible. We facilitated focus groups for advocates who were able to represent the views, interests, and learning needs of those less likely to disclose their experiences within a public engagement meeting. Some of these sessions were emotionally charged and we heard some moving accounts from children and young people that were both insightful and powerful. We strove to build trust and safe spaces for engaging, and we constantly reinforced to participants that we were independent facilitators who were keen to hear all viewpoints.

2.9 We also engaged children and young people in the places that they use, in ways that work for them, in areas of familiarity, including through social media. We also worked through trusted networks such as the safe spaces created by youth workers, and we connected extensively with parents and carers.

2.10 We wrote letters to parents in collaboration with Connect and the National Parent Forum of Scotland that were distributed through schools. National and local parent organisations led their own National Discussion engagement activities and invited us to participate in meetings and focus groups. Parents of vulnerable and marginalised groups were invited to participate or be represented in discussions with relevant organisations.

2.11 We collaborated with professional organisations to engage with the education workforce at all stages, from early years through to university. For example, the GTCS, EIS and the University of Glasgow hosted National Discussion events that we attended. We also met with the NASUWT Black Network, and we facilitated sessions during AHDS and ADES conferences and many school leader events hosted by local authorities. We visited schools and met with staff and learners. Many education organisations also facilitated their own discussions and submitted key points raised to contribute to the National Discussion datasets.

2.12 Local Authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) facilitated local events and/or invited us to join meetings to discuss the National Discussion. We had opportunities to engage with members of SOLACE, ADES and COSLA and had invitations to participate in their conferences and meetings.

2.13 In summary, we had an incredible response to our invitation to 'Let's Talk Scottish Education.' The National Discussion is the biggest public engagement exercise on education to have been undertaken nationally in Scottish education. To put this in context, the previous National Debate conducted twenty

years ago had 1,517 responses³. We received 5,671 formal responses for the current National Discussion. We wish to acknowledge and thank everyone who supported us and contributed their views and voices to shape the future of Scottish education.

2.14 An independent research company undertook an analysis of every National Discussion response received. This work has considered all the evidence gathered to ensure that all the voices that we heard, and all those who contributed, are included in the analysis. A separate analytical report is available.

2.15 A secondary-source review of various consultations undertaken with children and young people within the Scottish education system was also provided for us. It included a summary of existing vision statements (within various reports located within the education system) and a consideration of many longer national discussion responses submitted by key institutions and influential bodies (including those sent by education professional organisations, third sector advocates, and membership organisations).

2.16 To prepare this summary report, we have drawn upon the analytical report produced by an independent company. We have also systematically reviewed the data and undertaken a comparative analysis to inform the vision, values, and Call to Action. Some testing of the initial vision and values was conducted, and revisions were made to take account of feedback received. Inevitably, each response to the testing phase was accompanied by suggestions to revise the vision, and values in some way. On balance, however, the overall response to the vision and values was positive in terms of substance, tone, and positioning.

3 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0267152042000295465#:~:text=Schools%20for%20the%2021st%20century%3A%20the%20national%20debate%20on%20education%20in%20Scotland,-Full%20Article&text=In%202002%2C%20the%20Scottish%20Executive.that%2020%2C000%20people%20took%20part.>

The testing phase was also useful to ensure the wording, of the vision and values, resonates with key partners and stakeholders, while ensuring we stay true to our commitment that the substance of vision and values would be directly informed and shaped by responses to the National Discussion. Ultimately, our central purpose is to reflect, authentically and clearly, what we heard within the National Discussion.

2.17 We acknowledge that major reviews are underway, and we have stayed in touch with the leaders of the Skills Review and the Qualifications and Assessment Review⁴ but have retained our independence. We are also aware that there are many policy documents, previous reviews, and position papers that inevitably touch on the key areas that are reflected in our Call to Action. This work is not cited in this summary report as our intention is only to represent and reflect what we heard within the National Discussion.

2.18 It is important to reinforce that we have based the vision, values, and Call to Action *solely* on the National Discussion data analysis. Our role as facilitators is to faithfully represent the voices and views that we heard while remaining independent.

2.19 Clearly, given the scale of the responses received, we cannot include everything we heard in the National Discussion in this summary report or in the final report. Consequently, we have sought to represent the strongest and most consistent themes emerging from the analysis, cross-checked by a constant comparison of what we heard individually and collectively from September to December 2022. We have no vested interest in that we bring to this report. Our aim is to reflect upon the potential for the Scottish Education system, now and in the future, using the National Discussion data alone as the basis for what we say and conclude.



4 [Qualifications and Assessment Review: consultation analysis](#)



3.

Vision and Values

3. Vision and Values



3.1 Following the recommendations of the Muir Review, our task was to develop a compelling and consensual renewed vision for the future of Scottish education. Given the scale and variety of responses, there were inevitable differences of opinion within the views expressed about what needed to be included in a future vision. There were also some individuals, groups, and organisations offering strong positions on what they wanted to see in the vision that differed from what we heard from the majority of submissions to the National Discussion. Hence, we had to take care in how we responded to such advocacy. Consequently, the vision and values in this summary report reflect the broad findings and key themes from the National Discussion and do not reflect the positions or set views of any one individual, group, or organisation.

3.2 To assess whether the proposed vision and values resonated with children and young people, parents, and those working in and with the education system, during March 2023, we tested the vision at some key stakeholder meetings, including the Teacher Panel, the Education Reform Stakeholder Group, and the COSLA Children and Young People's Board, as well as with individuals, groups, and organisations that we had been in contact with throughout the National Discussion. The feedback from testing was generally positive with constructive feedback on the positioning and wording of the vision and values. Where appropriate, this feedback has prompted some changes to the vision and values presented in this summary report.

3.3 Overwhelmingly, the phrase that sums up the main message from the National Discussion is: ***All Learners in Scotland Matter***. This message has informed the vision, values, and Call to Action. The vision places children and young people at the heart of Scottish education and underlines the importance of valuing

collaborative partnerships with all those working in, or connected to, the education system. The vision commits to a Scottish education where all learners matter by providing an inclusive learning environment and high-quality learning experiences for *each* child and young person. The vision is provided below:

All Learners in Scotland Matter: Vision Statement for the Future of Scottish Education

Children and young people are at the heart of education in Scotland. The Scottish education system values collaborative partnerships that engage all learners, the people who work within and with the education system, parents, and carers to ensure that *all learners in Scotland matter*.

All learners are supported in inclusive learning environments which are safe, welcoming, caring, and proactively address any barriers to learning and inequities that exist or arise. Education in Scotland nurtures the unique talents of *all learners* ensuring their achievement, progress, and well-being.

Each child and young person in Scotland has high-quality learning experiences which respect their rights and represents the diversity of who they are and the communities they live in. *Each child and young person* receives great teaching, resources, and support for joyful learning that builds their confidence and equips them to be successful and to contribute in their life, work, and world, so they know how much *they matter*.

3.4 The vision speaks directly to the voices of the children and young people who said again and again that they wanted a safe, inclusive education system that valued everyone and celebrated all kinds of success.

3.5 Not everything in the vision, values, and call to action is new; indeed we heard about features of the Scottish education system that must be continued and further enhanced, such as a commitment to valuing children and young people's views, a broad-based education, the foundational importance of literacy and numeracy, the development of wellbeing, the pursuit of equity and equality, respect for a graduate-level teaching profession, the

importance of the work and working conditions of all members of the education workforce, and partnership with parents, carers, communities, and relevant agencies, specialists and service. In many cases, however, there was a recognition that more could be done to support the quality and consistency of implementation of existing policies and practices, as well as to be proactive about changes to meet the future needs of all learners and to improve the Scottish education system. The vision needs to balance the realism of what is needed now with an inspiring optimism for education in Scotland that equips children and young people for a rapidly changing world.

3.6 While the vision could potentially apply to learners of all ages, and we recognise the importance of children’s development from birth to adult education to lifelong learning, the remit of the National Discussion was for those aged 3-18 during the period of early learning and formal schooling.

3.7 Alongside a compelling vision, we heard about the importance of core values informing and underpinning the work of the Scottish education system. Scotland currently uses the phrase “excellence and equity” to encapsulate its aspirations for the Scottish education system and for its learners. There remains a deep commitment to these principles, but we heard that it was time to recraft and re-establish what values lie at the heart of Scottish education, both now and in the future. Hence we propose the following guiding values for education in Scotland.

3.8 We also heard that the outcomes of the National Discussion needed to go beyond a vision statement and values to inform actual actions. Next, therefore, we provide a summary of the Call to Action which maps out the key steps that need to be taken to achieve the vision and to uphold the values.



All Learners in Scotland Matter – Guiding Values



Ambitious – The Scottish education system will be ambitious by having high expectations for *all* learners and enabling *each* child and young person to develop and achieve their ambitions.



Inclusive – The Scottish education system will value, respect, recognise, and represent the diversity of *all* children and young people, and provide equitable educational experiences and opportunities for *all* learners.



Supportive – A hallmark of the Scottish education system will be to engage *each* child, young person, and adult meaningfully and appropriately in an education process that provides the necessary supports for *all* learners to progress, achieve, and realise their personal ambitions.



4.

A Call to Action

4. A Call to Action



4.1 A Call to Action (C2A) has been formulated based on the strongest themes and views arising from the National Discussion data. Inevitably, there were differences of opinion in what we heard and sometimes strong, opposing views. Hence, we tried to establish points of synergy, consolidation, and connection within and across the data sets, supported by the data analysis undertaken independently. We undertook a constant comparative approach across the data, testing, evaluating, and revisiting the evidence to ensure that we had a firm basis for the C2A that was grounded. We also considered what we had heard in the many online and in-person discussions we had engaged in, along with re-reading many of the written submissions.

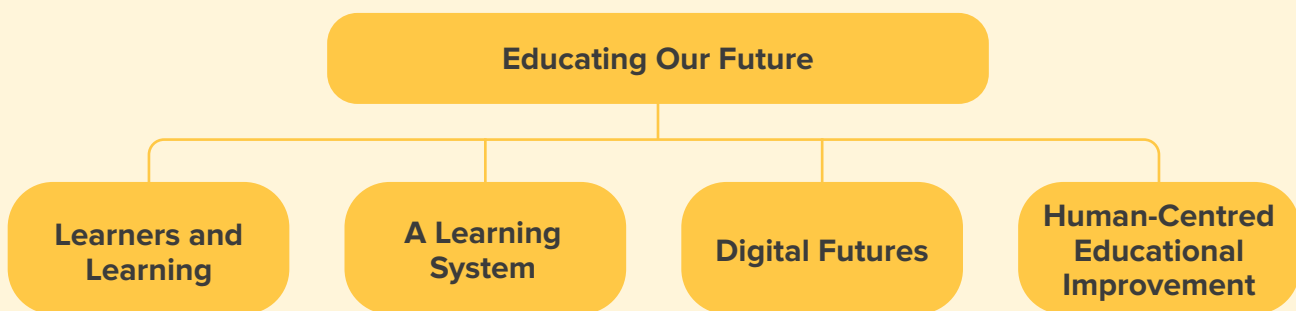
4.2 While the vision, values, and C2A are intended to be future-focused, a great deal of what we heard within the National Discussion was about contemporary issues, challenges, and areas of strength within the Scottish Education system. Consequently, this C2A aims to reflect both realism and pragmatism while also signalling what will be needed now and in the future to safeguard the learning and life-chances of all children and young people in Scotland.

4.3 As this is a summary report, we can only present the high-level elements of the C2A. The final report offers much greater detail accompanied by a commentary on the big ideas and a clear statement of intent for each component of the C2A. The C2A is intended to inspire action rather than to be seen as a prescription or mandate.

4.4 The high-level summary of the C2A outlined below reflects the strongest messages that emerged from the data. Overall, the most powerful message emanating from the National Discussion is the need to educate **all** learners in Scotland for an uncertain and unpredictable future. Hence our big, overarching theme in the C2A is *Educating Our Future* supported by four inter-related components: *Learners and Learning*, *A Learning System*, *Digital Futures* and *Human-Centred Educational Improvement*.

4.5 A brief overview of the elements that comprise the high-level summary of the C2A will follow. It is noted, however, that the final report gives detailed commentary on important issues that feature underneath these broad themes, such as: curriculum, assessment and qualifications, and the education workforce.

C2A High Level Summary



4.6 The overarching theme within the C2A is *Educating Our Future* which reinforces how children and young people in Scotland will actively shape a future society, a future economy, a future nation, a future planet, and a future world. *Educating Our Future* implies that the core purpose of education must be to enable children and young people to navigate the future with confidence, meaning, and kindness. This is why we have used the phrase ‘educating **our** future’ in this summary report, as the children and young people of Scotland will own that future and will ultimately create it.

4.7 It is recognised that to deliver an education system in Scotland that is fit to be proactive and flexible enough for a changing future requires looking at the present system and building upon its many strengths. The challenge, however, is to put in place a change or reform process that will move the education system in Scotland forward, both steadily and comprehensively involving central and local agencies. The responses within the National Discussion highlighted the need for bold changes within the education system and an urgent need for a future-focused reform process accompanied by quality implementation.

4.8 It is difficult to imagine a future education system in Scotland without children's rights being at the front and centre. We heard a great deal about how a future Scottish education system must uphold children's rights so that they feel safe to learn and empowered to positively shape their lives. Within the National Discussion, we heard many times how important it was for pupils of all ages to feel safe, secure, valued and listened to in their learning. An appreciation of diversity and equity to promote their well-being was also a consistent theme. Attention to developing and supporting the education workforce, reforming curriculum, qualifications, and assessments and integrating digital technologies and literacies were discussed. We also heard a great deal about the importance of valuing, listening to, and collaborating with the adults who work with children, especially teachers and all members of the wider education workforce, and parents/carers, families, and community members.

4.9 Overall, we heard the importance of ensuring that all learners in Scotland matter both now and in the future. The action point related to *Educating Our Future* is as follows:

Educating Our Future requires a Scottish education system that is proactive, flexible, integrated, and upholds the rights of all children and young people. A future Scottish Education system will offer high-quality teaching and learning, different learner pathways, alternative routes to success, and a range of appropriate assessments that reflect the unique talents of each learner, supports their ambitions, and meet the needs of a changing world.

4.10 Education is fundamentally about learning and teaching. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the most frequently mentioned topic in the National Discussion responses concerned learning, including the curriculum. The second most frequently mentioned topic was about the importance of teachers and staff to support students' needs and learning. In the theme of *Learners and Learning*, we have identified three main topics in the responses concerning: learning; inclusivity and diversity; and health and wellbeing.

4.11 In terms of *learning*, we heard that literacy and numeracy remain fundamentally important. In addition, we heard about the importance of Scotland continuing to have a broad-based education with all learners having access to subject choices and skills development that reflect their interests, talents, and personal ambitions to equip them in their lives, work, and world. In the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we also heard about the importance of all children and young people learning about their rights and respecting the rights of all people, appreciating diversity, and learning for sustainability to protect the environment.

4.12 Importantly, it was felt that there was a need to re-ignite the joy of learning, including more opportunities to play and learn outdoors. This suggests that learning should be recognised in a variety of ways that accommodate different learning pathways and options that learners choose. It suggests a shift from progression based on age and stage of schooling to flexible pathways and supported transitions to meet the developmental needs and interests of children and young people throughout their early years and school experiences.

4.13 In regard to *Inclusivity and Diversity*, we heard about the importance of ensuring a Scottish education system that advances human rights, equity, inclusivity, and appreciation of diversity to recognise, respect, and represent the unique talents, characteristics, needs, interests, and potential of all learners. This includes the need for awareness raising and learning about all forms of diversity, discrimination, and disadvantage for children and young people and for education workers and support staff.

4.14 We heard about the need for safe and inclusive schools, including attention to accessibility of buildings, classrooms and resources, and respectful relationships and proactive anti-bullying approaches. To fully achieve inclusivity requires ensuring dedicated and sustainable funding to provide adequate and appropriate staffing and specialist resources to be able to achieve the commitment to meet the individual needs of each learner; this is especially urgent for children and young people identified as having as having Additional Support Needs (ASN). We also heard about the importance of educational opportunities and communities in a range of languages, including Gaelic Medium Education and accessible communication in community languages. For equitable access to educational experiences and opportunities, we heard that education must not include upfront, hidden, or voluntary costs for parents/learners. The importance of community connections, multi-agency working, and third sector partnership were identified as important to meet the needs of all children and young people.

4.15 We heard that to fully value, respect, and represent the diversity of people in Scotland, it was important that this is reflected in the diversity of the education workforce, as well as reflected in the curriculum and all teaching and learning resources. Principles and practices such as anti-racist education and gender equity were identified as being paramount. Attention to equitable educational opportunities and experiences across the diversity of places and contexts in Scotland is also important, for example for rural, remote and island communities.

4.16 The continued importance of *Health and Wellbeing* as part of education was also proposed. We heard about the need for a range of pastoral care and whole-school approaches to nurture, and the development of positive, respectful, and healthy relationships, including dealing with incidences of bullying and harassment quickly and effectively. We also heard about the continued importance of addressing mental health of pupils and staff, and attention to children and young people's physical health. The need for ease of timely availability and access to specialist resources and expert supports to promote children and young people's wellbeing was highlighted.

4.17 The action points relating to Learners and Learning are:

All learners should have equitable access to high-quality learning opportunities and experiences and flexible pathways linked to each learner's interests, needs, development, and ambitions. Cultivating joy and a love for lifelong learning is important. The expertise and judgement of the education profession, including deep curricular knowledge and access to curriculum-linked resources, working with support staff and specialists is vital to achieving high-quality learning.

There is a need to ensure adequate sustained funding to provide staffing and specialist resources to be able to achieve the commitment to inclusivity and meeting the individual needs of each learner, with a particular urgency for children and young people identified as having Additional Support Needs (ASN). Learning about and appreciating the diversity of people and places is important and needs to be reflected in curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and represented in the education workforce. Safe and inclusive cultures that nurture respectful relationships and address discrimination and harassment are imperative.

There is a continued need to proactively learn about and support mental, emotional, and physical health and healthy relationships, and to provide whole-school approaches to nurture, safe learning spaces, and anti-bullying practices.

4.18 Moving on to *The Learning System*, within the Call to Action, we heard a great deal about curriculum, assessment, qualifications, and teaching. Yet, many of the comments we heard seemed to suggest that they were separate not integrated parts of the system. Respondents readily talked about the curriculum or assessment or teaching but rarely did they talk about these as a holistic, system-wide approach to realising better educational performance in Scotland.

4.19 From what we heard, therefore, it is suggested that a future education system in Scotland would benefit from greater system synergy where the structural, cultural, and practical realisation of these key components reflect a coherent, co-ordinated, and interdependent system, involving all key players in an integrated but not overly bureaucratic way. We also heard the need for the Scottish education system to be much more of a learning system that is able to take risks and to embark upon significant, bold and ambitious reform.

4.20 If the Scottish education system is to meet the needs of all learners in the near and distant future, then some bold structural and cultural changes are needed to ensure that all parts of the system pull in the same direction.



4.21 We heard frequently about the education workforce, the curriculum, plus assessment and qualifications. In terms of the education workforce, we heard about the importance of having stable staffing within a school environment, in terms of continuity and sustainability of high-quality teaching. Issues of teacher recruitment and retention were raised as potential fault lines in the system now and, potentially, in the future. The need for clear career paths, flexible training options, better salaries and benefits, and reduced administrative responsibilities to improve teacher recruitment were raised in many of the focus group sessions. On balance, the value of the professional workforce was clearly acknowledged within the National Discussion and the centrality of retaining great teachers in the profession in the future was strongly supported.

4.22 Turning next to the curriculum, the views we heard were very supportive of a more joined-up approach to the curriculum between different educational phases and smoother transitions throughout the learner journey, including the senior phase. Many of the group discussions echoed this position emphasising the need for greater clarity and coherence for the learners on the curriculum journey. In terms of the future, it was felt by many that we spoke to that Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) would benefit from a continual review process to ensure that it remained relevant, up to date and fit for purpose to meet the needs of a changing world.

4.23 Finally, in terms of assessment and qualifications, young people of all ages were very vocal about the need for a wider range of assessment options and pathways that afforded them a broader range of qualification options that underlined what they could do instead of what they could not do. It was clear from what we heard that the narrative about and approaches to assessment and qualifications needs to change to provide a better balance of learning options and learning pathways for young people that offer them parity of esteem, the opportunity to be recognised and qualifications that will be accepted by all and give them access to the career path they choose.

4.24 The actions related to *the learning system* are as follows:

The education workforce should be viewed holistically as a system-wide resource. The recognition, and reward, for the important work undertaken by all in the workforce needs to be established and reflected in career opportunities, and high-quality professional learning, to support high-quality practice as a common entitlement for all. Attention to diversifying the workforce and to supporting staff wellbeing is needed.

A regular curriculum review process should be established to ensure that the curriculum remains fit for purpose, reflects contemporary learner needs, and can be effectively delivered in ways to ensure that all learners in Scotland have high quality curricular-linked learning experiences.

A future education system should capitalise upon and harness the abilities, skills, and talents of all children and young people in Scotland. It should break down the academic/vocational divide, offer a broader set of assessment and qualification options, and formally recognise and reward the achievements of all learners.

4.25 While technology and digital resources did not feature in the National Discussion data as prominently as we expected, there were some strong views from employers, parents, and teachers of the need to recognise that digital technology has to be a central aspect of any education system that is future-focused.

4.26 Among learners, we heard a strong appetite for more opportunities to gain information and knowledge. A prevalent theme among learners was for education to help develop their digital literacy and skills to help prepare for work. Learners highlighted the need for more freedom of choice in terms of the types of digital engagement. One thing is clear; the digital world will open immense opportunities for the children and young people in Scotland who are prepared for it. Consequently, it is important that learners throughout Scotland are fully prepared for the digital future and that education in Scotland equips them in ways that allows them to fully participate and to thrive digitally.

4.27 The action related to *Digital Futures* is as follows:

Digital upskilling and digital transformation across the Scottish education system, at all levels, is an urgent priority for all learners in a future digital world. Attention to maximising the existing skills and infrastructure available to further build digital capacity is essential.

4.28 The final major theme in the responses to the National Discussion concerns what we are terming *Human-Centred Educational Improvement*. The National Discussion was intentionally called “Our National Discussion” to signal that this process needed to be inclusive of, and listen to, the voices and views of people across Scotland, particularly children and young people and those whose voices are often marginalised or unheard. The major

message that we heard throughout the National Discussion was that valuing people and positive relationships must be the essential features of Scottish education. While the future of Scottish education may be more digital, it absolutely must be more human too.

4.29 We heard from children and young people who wanted decision-makers to remember that their education was about them. Children and young people wanted to have friends, to like their teacher and to be liked by them, to have trusting relationships with adults who cared and could help them, to be safe, to learn lots of subjects and skills, to have fun, to play, to be listened to and be heard, and for their individual characteristics, needs, interests and ambitions to be respected, recognised, and supported. In many respects the adults that we spoke to wanted the same for children and young people, and indeed a version of this for themselves too.

4.30 We heard about the centrality of children and young people's voices being listened to within Scottish education, the importance of the professionals working in education leading and informing educational decisions and actions with their expertise and experiences, and the need to engage and communicate with parents, carers, and communities.

4.31 The action point for realising *Human-Centred Educational Improvement* is:

Human-centred educational improvement requires listening to children and young people's views and putting their needs at the heart of the Scottish education system, engaging parents/carers, families, and communities, and the education profession leading the way forward with professional expertise and judgement informing decisions and actions.



5.

Next Steps

5. Next Steps



5.1 As we have highlighted, this is a summary report that highlights the Vision, Values and Call to Action that, as independent facilitators of the National Discussion in Scotland, we were asked to produce.

5.2 We heard many concerns about whether the National Discussion would lead to genuine action. We also heard an overwhelming appetite for change (albeit the “right change”) and people who were enthusiastic about wanting to be involved in making this a reality. Indeed, the scale of engagement in, and responses to, the National Discussion is unprecedented.

5.3 We are not proposing that an avalanche of changes is imposed on the education system but rather that the National Discussion is viewed as a mandate for desired change that informs short-term, medium-term, and long-term actions. Change for change’s sake serves no-one and inevitably generates instability and confusion within the system. We are very aware that the education system and the professionals working in it are stretched with current demands and resource constraints. Hence, we are proposing that the pace of change needs to be realistic for quality implementation. Changes cannot be frenetic but change also cannot be invisible or non-existent. It is important to put

in place carefully sequenced and adequately resourced improvements with time for consolidation. There is a need to sustain and build on what is working well in the Scottish education system, as well as moving ahead with overdue and urgent changes that are needed and planning for longer-term future changes.

5.4 The people of Scotland have spoken, and we have listened. It is now it is time for ongoing dialogue and concrete action to realise the vision that *All Learners in Scotland Matter*.

5.5 We ask Scottish Government and COSLA to consider this summary report and the final report in ways that will help to take the Scottish education system forward. Given the scale of engagement with the National Discussion, there are high expectations within the education sector and publicly about the next steps. We will be watching with great interest and hoping that the changes that unfold across the Scottish system will ensure, both now and in the future, that 'All Learners in Scotland Matter'.



Appendices

Appendix A: National Discussion Engagement Phase



Appendix Facilitators Teams meetings and engagements		21 Sept – 5 Dec 2022
EVENT/ENGAGEMENT	DATE	
SOLACE conference	Sep-22	
Scottish Learning Festival	21/09/2022	
Carnegie Primary School	21/09/2022	
SG/CoSLA event with Parliamentary spokespeople	22/09/2022	
Meeting with EIS	22/09/2022	
Briefing of the Race Equality and Anti-Racism in Education Programme – early engagement	28/09/2022	
Education Reform Stakeholder Group – early engagement	28/09/2022	
South Ayrshire Council Children’s Rights Officer	29/09/2022	
Enable Scotland	03/10/2022	
Curriculum Advisory Board	28/09/2022	
Youth Scotland Remote and Rural Officer	05/10/2022	
Learning for Sustainability and Putting Young People at the Centre ‘round table’	05/10/2022	
ParentClub	06/10/2022	
Youthlink Scotland	06/10/2022	
Alan Sherry, CLD Standards Scotland	07/10/2022	
Young Scot	07/10/2022	
Engagement with BAME educators and young people (initial call) Khadija Mohammed (Chair of the Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators)	10/10/2022	
Sight Scotland – engagement with policy officials	12/10/2022	
CLD Standards council	14/10/2022	
AHDS conference pre meeting	19/10/2022	
ADES conference pre meet	21/10/2022	
GTCS	24/10/2022	

EVENT/ENGAGEMENT	DATE
Young Carers event	24/10/2022
Includem	25/10/2022
The Promise	25/10/2022
Virtual ICEA	25/10/2022
Scottish Education Council	26/10/2022
Virtual ICEA	27/10/2022
Focus groups 1 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	27/10/2022
Close the Gap	28/10/2022
Building Our Curriculum Self-Help Group (BOCSH)	28/10/2022
BOARD MEETING – Gaelic Medium Education	31/10/2022
Pre meet with Professor McMahon to discuss session	31/10/2022
Meeting with Island Directors	01/11/2022
SPION meeting	01/11/2022
Glasgow School of Education 1 of 2 events	01/11/2022
Glasgow School of Education 2 of 2 events	02/11/2022
AHDS conference	02/11/2022
ADES conference	04/11/2022
Visit to Craigie High School, Dundee	07/11/2022
Dundee headteachers event	07/11/2022
Learning for Sustainability Membership Event	07/11/2022
SCDE and Council of Deans	08/11/2022
National Youth Link Conference	08/11/2022
Colleges Scotland Officials	09/11/2022
National Deaf Children's Society	09/11/2022
The Promise	09/11/2022
East Ayrshire Council parental engagement event	09/11/2022
St Alberts school visit	09/11/2022
Connect and NPFS focus group	09/11/2022
Visit to Aberdeen Grammar School	10/11/2022
Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray school leaders' event	10/11/2022

EVENT/ENGAGEMENT	DATE
Stirling and Forth Valley RIC	10/11/2022
Sight Scotland and RNIB Scotland Conference on the future of Scottish Education	10/11/2022
Teachers Panel – ad hoc	11/11/2022
Children’s Parliament	11/11/2022
EIS conference on National Discussion	12/11/2022
Rural & Remote Focus Group	15/11/2022
CYPIC Conference (marketplace stall)	15/11/2022
Sight Scotland – Pupil Council Session	15/11/2022
Focus groups 3 of 8 Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	15/11/2022
ND Young People events – School Assembly	16/11/2022
Angus Council	16/11/2022
Highly Able Learners session	16/11/2022
Sight Scotland – discussion with the teaching and support staff	17/11/2022
Forth Valley & West Lothian RIC	17/11/2022
Focus groups 4 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	18/11/2022
Meeting with James Russell, Skills Development Scotland	18/11/2022
NASUWT Scottish Executive Council meeting	18/11/2022
Professor Mark Priestley of Stirling University	18/11/2022
Careers Educations Review/Skills Scotland	18/11/2022
Focus groups 5 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	21/11/2022
National Discussion session at Elgin High School	22/11/2022
Online engagement event with youth workers, Youthlink Scotland	22/11/2022
Public online event	22/11/2022
ND Young People events – Education Scotland lead	23/11/2022
Focus groups 6 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	23/11/2022
Call with Judy Wagner on Stewart Review	23/11/2022
School Assembly Sessions X2	23/11/2022
Public online event	23/11/2022
Young Ambassadors for Inclusion Event	24/11/2022
Focus groups 7 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	25/11/2022

EVENT/ENGAGEMENT	DATE
MSYP Panel discussion	26/11/2022
Focus groups 8 of 8 with Child Rights and Inclusion organisations	28/11/2022
Education Scotland – Lesley Whelan	28/11/2022
CLD Standards council	28/11/2022
RICs	28/11/2022
Scottish Islands Federation members	29/11/2022
GTCS twilight session	29/11/2022
Glasgow City Parents group	30/11/2022
English as a Second Language Teachers	30/11/2022
National Academy for Educational Leadership Stakeholder Forum	30/11/2022
South East Improvement Collaborative	30/11/2022
Early Years Scotland – Jane Brompton	30/11/2022
South Ayrshire Council Children’s Rights event	01/12/2022
Developing Young Workforce employers	01/12/2022
Public online event	01/12/2022
NASUWT Black Members’ Network	01/12/2022
Time for Inclusive Education	05/12/2022
Demographic team	05/12/2022
Meeting with business leaders	18/01/2022

Appendix B: National Discussion Public Engagement Statistics



Let's Talk Scottish Education

We came to you

Events and discussions took place in every part of Scotland, from Shetland to the Borders, led by schools, community groups and third sector organisations – reaching more than

38,000 people.



You shared



We received feedback in a host of different ways – including

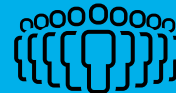
drawings, mindmaps and videos

You answered

+5600 responses

You got together

Over 200 group responses were submitted



You joined **26,000 pupils and students** attended online assemblies

attended online assemblies



You gave us your time

More than **80 people** attended a series of online public events



You joined the discussions on socials

More than **6,000 posts** on Twitter about the National Discussion using the hashtag #TalkScottishEducation

More than **10 million social media users** have seen the hashtag





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The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: The Review and its Key Recommendations

June 2023

The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment: The Review and its Key Recommendations

1. What was the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment?

An Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment was announced by The Scottish Government in October 2021. The Review was initiated in response to:

- recommendations in the OECD's Independent Review of Scotland's school curriculum (2021)
- the COVID-19 pandemic and a renewed debate around assessment following the cancellation of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams in 2020 and 2021
- Professor Gordon Stobart's OECD paper setting out possible options for Scotland's future approach to assessment and qualifications (2021)
- Professor Ken Muir's report (2022) – Putting Learners at the Centre

Professor Louise Hayward was appointed to lead the Review and began work in Spring 2022.

2. Why does this Review matter?

“Qualifications and assessment are important to learners, to educational establishments and to society. They provide information to learners, and as appropriate parents/carers, on progress and achievements. Colleges, employers and universities use them to decide who to admit to which course or who to interview. They are used as evidence of the quality of schools. Thus, qualifications and assessment matter to individuals, communities and wider Scottish society. Every learner deserves the best possible life chance and qualifications and assessment have a key role to play in making that a reality” - Professor Louise Hayward, University of Glasgow

3. What was the aim of the Review?

The aim of the Independent Review was to ensure that all Senior Phase learners have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the width, depth, and relevance of their learning.

The Review was concerned with Senior Phase qualifications in schools, colleges and wider educational settings. The focus was predominately learners aged 15-18 in all educational settings, but the Review also considered possible implications for home educated learners and for adult learners who study courses that fall within the Review's remit.

The Review's Terms of Reference can be found [here](#).

4. How was the Review undertaken?

Professor Hayward developed an innovative model of engagement, designed to seek views on key issues from a wide range of participants including learners and teachers.

An Independent Review Group (IRG) was established including a range of participants with an interest in qualifications (learners and, as appropriate, parents/carers, those who design, develop and offer qualifications, from classroom teachers to national bodies, and those who

use qualifications, colleges, employers and universities). To extend and deepen the range of those involved each IRG member led a Collaborative Community Groups (CCG). You can find out more information about the IRG and CCGs [here](#).

The Review had three Phases. Views from stakeholders were sought at each Phase.

4.1 Phase One: Summer 2022

The Review began by working with the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children's Parliament to ask what the future should be for Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland. From there a draft statement of Vision and Principles was developed.

Views were sought via the CCGs and invited from every secondary school and college in Scotland. An independent analysis of the responses from Phase One can be found [here](#).

The evidence from the Phase One engagement found support for the ideas in the draft Vision and Principles statements. However, there was advice to simplify and sharpen the language. The Vision and Principles were re-drafted accordingly and can be found [here].

4.2 Phase Two: October 2022 - January 2022

In the second phase of engagement the Review asked questions about what the future qualifications and assessment system would be like if consistent with the Vision and Principles. This included seeking views on whether or not evidence should be gathered across all four Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) capacities, whether information should be gathered on learners' skills and competencies, the balance between internal and external assessment, the use of technology, wider in and out of school activities, and the introduction of a leaving certificate at the end of the Senior Phase. Phase Two sought views from the CCGs and all schools and colleges and also involved a 12 week public consultation.

There was clear support for reforming Scotland's qualifications and assessment system. Respondents were in favour of introducing a leaving certificate in the Senior Phase to provide more holistic recognition of learners' achievements, skills and competencies. There was no clear consensus on what a 'better balanced' assessment system would look like. Some favoured a mixture of continuous assessments or smaller, regular tests and exams, others requested eliminating end-of-year examinations entirely. There was a strong desire to see recognition of achievement going beyond individual subjects/curricular areas. For example, learners should have opportunities to demonstrate skills as they use knowledge and to include information on in or out of school activities. Many raised practical issues that would have to be addressed.

The independent analysis of Phase Two can be found [here](#).

The feedback received from Phase Two led to the development of a high-level Diploma model which was tested during Phase Three.

4.3 Phase Three – High-level Diploma Model

During Phase Three the Review invited views on a high-level Diploma model with three mandatory elements and on practical implications. You can see the first iteration of this

model [here](#). Views were again sought via the CCGs and invited from every school and college in Scotland.

While many respondents were positive about the objectives underpinning the Diploma and its three components there were concerns voiced in respect of equality, particularly in relation to the Personal Pathway component. Respondents also sought detail on the practical implications. The model was revised, and the report of the Review includes recommendations on the practical steps needed to put the Diploma into practice.

5. What did the final report recommend?

Professor Hayward submitted her final report to The Scottish Government on 5 June 2023 and it was published on 22 June.

Recommendations in the final report focus on the introduction of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA) with three elements: Personal Pathway, Programmes of Learning and Project Learning.

The Review recommends that the Diploma should be the graduation certificate offered in all settings where Senior Phase education is provided. All learners should be offered the chance to experience learning in all elements of the Diploma and that these should be entitlements.



5.1 'Programmes of Learning'

The final report states that learners would continue to study in-depth individual areas of the curriculum, general subjects and vocational, technical and professional qualifications. These would remain a fundamental part of qualifications. Where currently qualifications are graded, e.g., Highers, Advanced Highers, they would continue to be graded.

Courses would be designed in modules. As learners complete modules, they would build credit. Where a qualification has an examination, the credit learners have built through the course would be combined with result from the final examination to obtain the final grade. This would reduce the risk for learners of performing only a single day event.

A wider range of methods of assessment would be used and methods would be appropriate to the individual programme. The number of examinations in the Senior Phase would be reduced.

5.2 What is the 'Personal Pathway'?

The central focus of the Personal Pathway is reflection on learning, whether that be learning in school, in college or in the community. The purpose of the Personal Pathway is to give learners the opportunity to personalise their qualification profile by selecting aspects of their experiences that reflect their interests, the contributions they make to society and their career aspirations in employment and to discuss these in a reflective way.

The focus of the Personal Pathway is not on the number of experiences but on what an individual has learnt through an experience. The Personal Pathway would not be graded but would be subject to authentication processes. The Personal Pathway would be owned by the learner.

5.3 What is 'Project Learning'?

In Project Learning, learners would have the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills they have developed in their Programmes of Learning to tackle a significant question or problem that is important to them by undertaking a Project. For some learners, the focus could be on a global challenge, for example, climate change, migration or social justice. Projects may be undertaken individually or in groups, but assessment would be individual. Project Learning would not be graded but will be linked to SCQF levels each with a different number of credit points.

5.4 What else does the Review Recommend?

- The Review also recommends that there should be a digital profile for all learners which allows them to record personal achievements, identify and plan future learning.
- In a bid to strengthen parity of esteem between different types of qualifications there should be a move to use the terms 'SCQF level' as the key descriptor followed by type of qualification. E.g. SCQF Level 6 – Higher.
- The information on learners' achievements within the SDA, courses and projects should be aligned in Scottish Statistics on Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations and INSIGHT data.
- There are a number of recommendations on the change process and what has to happen if the Scottish Diploma of Achievement is to be developed successfully.

6. Why would the SDA be better?

6.1 Better for learners

The SDA would transform the Senior Phase experience. Learners would experience a Senior Phase better aligned with the original vision of CfE. Learners would have greater choice and opportunity to personalise their Senior Phase. They would provide better support for learners as they move beyond school into college, employment, university or the voluntary sector.

“We have spent a year working on the proposed models for change and the new Scottish Diploma of Achievement; a model which I truly believe will keep the UNCRC at its heart as it supports the young people of the future on their own learner journeys.” - Beinn Grant (SYP)

6.2 Better for teachers and lecturers

The SDA would remove the two-term dash which results in continuous cycles of examination rehearsal and preparation. Teachers and lecturers will have more time to focus on high quality, rich learning experiences.

“At last, we have an opportunity, through the Scottish Diploma of Achievement, to better reflect the broader purposes of education in positively shaping people and lives, not simply measuring or counting learners’ achievements but fully recognising and valuing them. We need to grasp this opportunity with both hands.” - Andrea Bradley, (EIS)

6.3 Better for universities, colleges, employers and those who use qualifications

The wider, more personalised information provided through the SDA would provide colleges, employers and universities with a better evidence base to inform their decisions about which students or employees are best suited to which course or job.

“As society changes, university study changes with it, and the university students of the future will need to master not only specialist subject knowledge, but also weave together that knowledge in increasingly uncertain, changeable and complex contexts. Above all they will have to master the art of learning itself, so as to be effective contributors to Scottish society, industry, our professions, culture and polity. The proposed Scottish Diploma of Achievement will provide an excellent foundation for learners as they complete the university degrees of the future.” - Professor Jonathan Powles (Universities Scotland)

6.4 Better for Scotland

Society is changing fast. Many countries internationally are seeking to adapt and modernise their qualifications and assessment system. Scotland’s system must keep pace with this change.

“We live in a rapidly changing world. Education systems are having to adjust to this, and internationally we are seeing changes to the way students learn and what they learn. While Scotland has led the way in this with its Curriculum for Excellence, its historic assessment system has limited the changes in senior secondary education. Professor Hayward’s

Independent Review Group has sought to better align the Scottish examination system with these contemporary needs. It offers a powerful way forward for assessment in Scotland.”
Professor Gordon Stobart (IoE, UCL)

7. Planning for Change

The report notes that one of the most important lessons from the introduction of CfE is how important it is to have a clear plan to put ideas into practice. The plan for the introduction and development of the SDA will require major cultural change throughout the educational system. In addition.

- Investment would be required for professional learning, time for collaboration and for moderation (including avoiding bias) to ensure fairness for every learner and public confidence in the system.
- All change must be carefully planned in phases and resourced.
- The process of change should be inclusive building from and extending the collaborative processes developed during the Review.

8. Where can I find out more?

You can read the [full report](#) on the Scottish Government website.

9. What happens next?

The Scottish Government is considering the report and recommendations and will respond in due course.



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