

The Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland. An Independent Review



Help us to make the Future of
Qualifications and Assessment in
Scotland better for EVERY Learner

Paper One: Schools and Colleges Pack

Your part in the process

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Paper 1

Introduction

Professor Hayward invites you to take part in the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland.

Professor Hayward has been appointed by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, to undertake an Independent Review, looking at how the current system could better recognise the achievements of all learners.

The Review will be inclusive both in its design and in its development.

It will involve:

- Those for whom qualifications matter most, individual learners and, as appropriate, their parents or carers;
- Those involved in the design development and delivery of qualifications, for example teachers and lecturers, headteachers, local and national policy communities, national agencies.
- Those who use qualifications, for example, schools, colleges, employers and universities.

The Review will also be informed by evidence from research on topics key to the work of the Review, e.g.; international qualifications and qualification systems, curriculum, equity and inclusion, and what matters if change is to be successful.

Why the need for a Review?

The need for review: evidence from OECD Reports, the Muir Report and the COVID-19 experience:

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), helps identify what matters for young people to be considered educated citizens. In Scotland, that means that every young person should be a successful learner, a confident individual, an effective contributor and a responsible citizen. What that means for individual learners will vary but these four capacities should apply to the learning experiences and outcomes for every learner. Individual learners experiences in education should, therefore, be focused on those capacities as should the outcomes including assessment and qualifications. Often this is described as ‘curriculum, pedagogy and assessment being in alignment’.

The OECD Reports

This Review stems in part, from the recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports into Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). The first report, *Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence - Into the Future* (2021) found that whilst CfE “*continues to be a bold and widely supported initiative, and its design offers the flexibility needed to improve student learning further...the structure, learning practices and assessment approaches in the senior phase also need adapting to be consistent with CfE’s vision, and to allow for the smooth curriculum experience promised from 3 to 18.*”

The subsequent report by Professor Gordon Stobart, *Upper-secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective* (2021), sought to explain the perceived ‘misalignment’ between curriculum and assessment and to highlight opportunities for reform of assessments in the senior phase.

The Muir Report

Two key themes from the Muir report on the reform of Scotland’s education agencies, *Putting Learners at the Centre* (2022) include:

- learners should be at the centre of future education reform.
- there is a need for a ‘cultural and mind-set’ change in respect of all those involved in the education system in Scotland.

These two key themes have shaped the way in which this Review has been designed.

The COVID-19 Experience

In addition to these recent reports, our approach to qualifications in Scotland was subject to major change during COVID-19. The changes to qualifications raised a number of concerns but also demonstrated the ability of teachers and learners to engage with a system of qualification that doesn’t depend on ‘high stake exams’.

The need for review: evidence on future global challenges

Beyond the reports identified above and the experience of COVID-19, there are wider reasons for undertaking a review of assessment and qualifications. The world we live in is changing rapidly and significantly. In 2018, before the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Future of Education and Skills Programme identified three major international challenges for the future:

Environmental:

- *Climate change and the depletion of natural resources require urgent action and adaptation.*

Economic:

- *Scientific knowledge is creating new opportunities and solutions that can enrich our lives, while at the same time fuelling disruptive waves of change in every sector.*
- *Financial interdependence at local, national and regional levels has created global value chains and a shared economy, but also pervasive uncertainty and exposure to economic risk and crises.*
- *Data is being created, used and shared on a vast scale, holding out the promise of expansion, growth and improved efficiency while posing new problems of cyber security and privacy protection.*

Social:

- *As the global population continues to grow, migration, urbanisation and increasing social and cultural diversity are reshaping countries and communities.*
- *In large parts of the world, inequalities in living standards and life chances are widening, while conflict, instability and inertia, often intertwined with populist politics, are eroding trust and confidence in government itself. At the same time, the threats of war and terrorism are escalating.¹*

Education systems around the world are changing as each nation seeks to ensure that students in their schools and colleges are well prepared to face the challenges that the future is likely to bring. In many countries these challenges were already present before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the global pandemic has accelerated the process of change.

¹ OECD, The Future of Education and Skills 2030 (2018): [E2030 Position Paper \(05.04.2018\).pdf \(oecd.org\)](#)

How the Independent Review will be undertaken

Change likely to lead to improvement needs to be based on insights from each of the communities previously listed (individual learners and parents/carers, educational professionals, and users of qualifications, colleges, employers and universities). Proposed change also has to be grounded in evidence from research.

[Paper 2](#) outlines the multi-level approach to our engagement.

Your part in the process: Phase one

We now invite you to take part in the first of three discussions.

In this Phase we invite you to provide feedback on the draft Vision Statement and draft Principles.

The purpose of this task is to gather views and build a picture of what we are trying to achieve; our Vision and Principles for the Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland. We need to do this *before* we start thinking about possible Options for change (Phase two).

To note, the draft Vision Statement and draft Principles were first developed with colleagues from the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children's Parliament. They were subsequently amended following discussion with members of the Independent Review Group.

In Phase one we are seeking your views in respect of two overarching questions:

- What do you think of the proposed draft Vision Statement for the Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland?
- What do you think of the proposed draft Principles for the Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland?

Please provide your views on these questions by completing the online survey.

Link to the online survey:

Please access the online survey here and complete your response by 5 pm on Friday 2 September

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/qualificationsreform/>

Draft Vision Statement: Your views

Please read and provide feedback on the draft Vision Statement

To what extent does this represent your Vision for the Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland?

Please consider the draft Vision and the statements that follow below:

Draft Vision

Qualifications and Assessments in Scotland should reflect what matters in the curriculum, recognise every learner's achievements and provide evidence to inspire the next steps in their learning journey.

This Vision for the Future of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland will.

- Recognise the diversity of achievements of every individual learner;
- Provide a solid foundation to the future for all learners, that will support the next step in their life journey be that in employment, further education, higher education, or through other contributions to society; for example volunteering
- Promote a wide-range of opportunities that meet the needs of all learners;
- Recognise the rights of children, encourage well-being and support the lifelong development of citizens, creating a positive future for Scotland and the wider world; and
- Be recognised and valued by all learners, schools, colleges, universities, employers and by society generally.

Thinking about the Future of Qualifications and Assessment, does the draft Vision Statement accurately reflect what matters most to your community/ies?

Prompts:

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

Draft Principles: Your views

Individual Principles

Please read and provide feedback on the draft Principles below:

We seek your views on seven draft Principles. First, we ask you to consider each principle individually. Then we ask you to consider them as a whole.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 1:

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Be responsive to the fast changing needs of individual learners and Scotland in an increasingly complex and globalised society.

Please share your thoughts on Principle 1.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 2:

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Be inclusive both in design and development involving:

- those to whom qualifications matter most (all individual learners and, as appropriate, their parents and carers);
- those who use qualifications (colleges, universities, employers, wider organisations); and
- those who design and deliver qualifications (teachers, lecturers, qualification boards, accrediting agencies, local authorities).

Please share your thoughts on Principle 2.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 3

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Reflect the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence.

- What is required for learners to participate fully in Scotland as a 21st century democracy?

Please share your thoughts on Principle 3.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 4

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Recognise the achievements of every learner

- Should support and enable the future goals of all
- Should have learner pathways that best fit future aspirations including academic and vocational courses.

Please share your thoughts on Principle 4.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 5

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Be clear, coherent and understood by all as part of a seamless lifelong learning journey.

- Should provide clear and trusted evidence of a wide-range of achievements to date and act as a foundation for future learning whatever path an individual learner chooses to take.

Please share your thoughts on Principle 5.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 6

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Support flexible approaches to assessment.

- Allowing different forms of evidence to contribute to the recognition of achievement.

Please share your thoughts on Principle 6.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

DRAFT PRINCIPLE 7

Scotland's Qualifications system should:

Be adaptable and kept under review to ensure that the needs of all learners and wider society continue to be met.

Please share your thoughts on Principle 7.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

Principles as a whole

Please share your thoughts on the draft Principles, as a whole.

Prompts

- What, if anything, would you add?
- What, if anything, would you remove?
- Please note any other suggested changes here.

Paper 2

Inclusive policy design and development

Inclusive policy design and development – Why?

Evidence from international research on the process of change states that for change to be successful, all those who will be involved in making change happen must be part of its development. In this Review, this means the involvement of:

- those for whom qualifications matter most, individual learners and, as appropriate, their parents or carers;
- those involved in the design, development and delivery of qualifications, for example teachers and lecturers, headteachers, local and national policy communities, national agencies, examination boards, regulators; and
- those who use qualifications, for example schools, colleges, employers and universities.

This Review attempts to adopt ways of working that draw on the thinking of individuals and communities in a wide range of roles. This approach is intended to ensure that the Review leads to recommendations for a future that is principled, practical and highly regarded.

There are four main strands to our engagement activity.

1. Engagement via the Independent Review Group and the Collaborative Community Groups
2. Engagement via schools and colleges
3. Public consultation
4. Other engagement opportunities

Independent Review Group and Collaborative Community Groups

Professor Hayward has invited members to her Independent Review Group (IRG) who have a variety of skills and experiences. Membership of IRG is drawn from the following communities:

- those to whom qualifications matter most (all individual learners and, as appropriate, their parents or carers);
- those who use qualifications (colleges, universities, employers and wider organisations); and
- those who design deliver qualifications (teachers, lecturers, examination boards, accrediting agencies, local authorities).

The role of each IRG member is not to represent an organisation but to act as a link to a community.

- IRG members will identify and invite individuals from their respective community to form an extended group; a Community Collaborative Group.
- IRG members should ensure that the membership of their CCG reflects the diversity of Scotland's communities and learners.

