

Major reforms to Scottish Education

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The background

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in Scotland engages students from 3-18 years. The framework was introduced in 2010 and, in 2021, the OECD was invited by the Scottish government to: 'assess the implementation of CfE, to understand how curricula are designed and implemented in schools and to identify what can be improved for CfE to continue to deliver quality learning for all students' (Executive summary).

The report looked at both BGE Broad General Education (3-15) and the Senior Phase (15-18). Key findings were:

- CfE continues to be supported and offers flexibility to improve learning.
- Stakeholder engagement needs better structure and shared ownership to improve leadership.
- Coherence of policy is needed; work is needed to balance autonomy, equity for students, government initiatives and to align assessment with CfE ambitions.
- A structured approach is needed to plan longer-term developments.

The recommendations were:

- Coherent learning experience 3-18: *reassess vision against emerging trends; better balance between breadth and depth of learning; adapt the Senior phase to match the vision; and continue to build curricular capacity using research.*
- Consolidate institutional policy for effective changes: *provide time to support CfE at school level; simplify policies; align curriculum, qualifications and evaluation to deliver 'Building the Curriculum 5 (CfE)'; and develop a systematic approach to curriculum review.*
- Provide a long-term view and structured review.

What are the outcomes?

In Autumn 2021, the Scottish Government accepted the 12 recommendations of the OECD report: SQA would be replaced; remit of Education Scotland would be reviewed; and its inspection role removed. It appointed Prof. Kenneth Muir, formerly Chief Executive of GTC and HMI Chief Education Inspector, to undertake the consultation and report back. **Putting Learners at the Centre: towards a future vision for Scottish Education** was published in March 2022.

Summary of recommendations

A renewed vision

National discussion; learners at the centre; address article 29 of UNCRC; invitation to all partners and stakeholders.

To shape the vision

A new Qualifications and Assessment body: Qualifications Scotland:

- Responsible for design and delivery of qualifications, exams and awards.
- Governance structure should include more representation of stakeholders, learners, practitioners.

A new national agency for Scottish education:

- providing support and improvement functions for a number of existing bodies, including Education Scotland;
- providing accreditation and regulation of qualifications;
- providing advice on curriculum and assessment policy;
- making sure that all needs of learners and practitioners are met at local and national level;
- acknowledging that significant resources will be necessary;

- ensuring governance is participative;
- using digital means to engage with all stakeholders;
- Community Learning and Development Standards Council will remain part of new agency;
- Registrar of Independent Schools will return to the learning directorate of Scottish Government and will work closely with GTCS; all teachers will be registered and regulated by them;
- creating a forum for ongoing discussion about curriculum, assessment, learning and teaching, professional learning and leadership;
- SCQF to be brought into the Agency.

Inspection: An independent body enshrined in legislation, staffed by civil servants, funded by Scottish Parliament, with inspectors appointed by Her Majesty via the Privy Council, to: have a role to support improvement, evaluate major changes and report on the performance of Scottish education; liaise with Care Inspectorate and reduce burden on ELC; and look at local arrangements to support change at local and regional level.

Other implications: *Insight* tool to be further developed. There will be collaboration between agencies to ensure that policies are aligned. The Transitions Team will engage all stakeholders. *Still to come: Professor Louise Hayward's report on senior phase assessment.*

Useful links

Putting Learners at the Centre: towards a future vision for Scottish Education. Available at www.gov.scot

Scottish Curriculum for Excellence: into the future, published by OECD, June 2021. Available at: www.oecd.org

Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government. Response to OECD review, June 2021. Available at: www.gov.scot

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