

Education Reform - Consultation Analysis

**Wellside Research Ltd. - Final Report
February 2022**

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Summary of Findings

Introduction

Following the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) independent review into Scotland's school curriculum¹, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment. The reform of Education Scotland was also announced, with the removal of the function of inspection from the agency². This report outlines the findings from a public consultation, which sought views on these reforms, and will support the independent Advisor to prepare his report and recommendations. The independent research consultancy, Wellside Research Ltd, was appointed to undertake the following analysis of the consultation responses.

In total, **851 responses** were received to the consultation. This consisted of:

- **690 responses** to the main consultation document or set questions;
- **74 responses submitted by email** which did not follow the consultation questions set; and
- notes from **87 meetings and webinars**³.

It should be noted, however, that many of the meetings and webinars involved multiple contributors, and a number of consultation responses represented groups of contributors and/or wider consultation with members or stakeholder groups. Therefore, the true number of people who provided feedback to the consultation can be assumed to be higher than the numbers outlined above.

Key Findings

Levels of agreement were sought across a range of statements. Table 1 outlines the percentage of responses to the public consultation:

¹ [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#)

² [Education Reform: Consultation on Behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

³ An online survey of young people was also conducted, the results of which have been analysed separately and are not included within this report.

Table 1 Agreement at Closed Questions

Question/Statement	% who agreed*
Q1.1 The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland	58%
Q2.1 Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions	22%
Q3.1 In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners	31%
Q4.1 The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report	39%
Q5.1 The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools	51%
Q6.1 Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments	18%
Q8.1 There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie	11%
Q9.1 There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues	9%
Q10.1 There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners	26%
Q11.1 There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making	15%
Q12.1 Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity	61%

* Based on the 690 respondents who answered the set questions, and either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed'.

Overall, respondents supported the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the four capacities⁴. While it was felt that this worked well at the Broad General Education (BGE) level, it was stressed that CfE does not transfer into the Senior Phase where teaching was considered to be constrained by a need to focus on examination preparation. Indeed, many respondents felt that reform of the Senior Phase was required in order to provide a better balance between achieving academic qualifications and recognising other achievements, as well as to provide parity of esteem between academic and vocational routes.

⁴ These include: successful learner, confident individual, effective contributor and responsible citizen.

It was also stressed that the educational landscape in Scotland was cluttered, with too many organisations at national, regional and local levels which appeared to overlap or duplicate each other in terms of their roles and responsibilities. It was felt this resulted in a lack of clarity in relation to where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE lie. It also made it difficult for teachers/practitioners to know what support, resources, and professional learning opportunities were available, and where and how to access these. Further, it was suggested that teachers/practitioners were often unsure about the veracity and quality of resources, and they did not have the time to research each offering themselves. Some indicated that they now relied on local networks and other teachers/practitioners rather than external bodies for support.

Respondents were generally supportive of the four reform proposals, i.e. to remove the inspection function from Education Scotland, further reform of Education Scotland, to replace SQA (although many felt this should be reformed), and to consider the creation of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency.

It was felt that the inspection function should be moved to a separate agency, which was independent of both the Scottish Government and any other education/policy setting agency in order to be fully impartial. It was also stressed that the language and focus of inspections needed to change - moving away from a focus on 'scrutiny' and towards 'improvement'.

Further reforms were suggested for Education Scotland, both to set out clear information about its remit, and that it could be developed into an agency to support curricular change and development, along with developing and supporting teaching and learning pedagogy. However, several questioned the purpose of Education Scotland without the inspection function as they felt all other aspects of its work would duplicate other agencies.

There were mixed views regarding whether the SQA should be replaced or reformed, although most respondents agreed some form of change was required. It was felt this was an opportunity to consider and reform the end of year examination structure. Several respondents also stressed that any changes to, or removal of the SQA would, however, need to be mindful of the impact on the college sector and not simply consider the issues from a school-based perspective.

The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency was largely considered to be an opportunity to realign the BGE and Senior Phases, and to allow more focus on pedagogy throughout the various stages. However, several did express a fear that this could result in lower importance being placed on assessments and thus impact adversely on university applications. Many stressed that the roles and responsibilities of any new agency would need to be clearly set out and communicated, along with its relationship to other available agencies, and that it would be important to avoid duplication with those other agencies (although it was felt that such clarity was necessary for **all** agencies across the sector).

Throughout the consultation, it was suggested that those with current/recent experience of teaching should be involved in developing, informing and indeed staffing both the inspection agency and any new Curriculum and Assessment Agency. Secondment models were suggested as one method to achieve this.

Several also stressed that other educational sectors needed to be considered and included throughout. This included Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), Gaelic Medium Education, the Catholic education service, college and university settings, youth work and community education, all of whom noted that they often felt like 'add-ons' rather than fully integrated and supported parts of the Scottish education system.

In terms of timescales, across all the proposed reforms, many felt that time should be allocated as required to fully consider any changes and make these effectively. It was suggested there were significant risks in rushing through any changes for 'political expediency'. Where timescales were specified, it was typically suggested that a five year window would be required. It was stressed, however, that careful management and messaging in relation to the current system would be needed in the interim.

While acknowledging the opportunities, some respondents also expressed concerns that the proposed reforms could end up consisting of system changes which simply rebrand the current system rather than providing any meaningful culture change. It was stressed that those designing the reforms and any agencies involved would need to be receptive to feedback, and that clear communication would be required going forward to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and engaged.

Ultimately, many respondents called for wider reforms of the education sector along with ongoing consultation throughout the design and implementation process. There was strong support for a 'bottom-up' approach, with both teacher/practitioner and learner involvement, for teachers/practitioners to be genuinely empowered within and by the reforms, and for all changes to be learner focused in order to improve the learner journey for all pupils/students and to provide multiple learner pathways. Furthermore, it was considered important to ensure that all stakeholders across all sectors were engaged in the reforms.

Introduction

Background

In June 2021, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its independent review into Scotland's school curriculum⁵. This outlined 12 recommendations, which the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced would be accepted in full⁶. One of these recommendations was to create a new specialist agency to be responsible for the curriculum and assessment. The OECD published a further report in August 2021 which considered upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland⁷. This highlighted a "misalignment" between the Broad General Education (BGE)⁸ and the Senior Phase⁹.

Following the first OECD report, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced in June 2021 the intention to replace the SQA and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment, while also taking forward reform of Education Scotland, including removing the inspection function from the agency¹⁰. To support this process, Professor Ken Muir was appointed as an Independent Advisor on Education Reform, to provide impartial advice and recommendations around the proposed changes¹¹.

The Advisor conducted an extensive consultation on these proposed changes, part of which included a public consultation. Wellside Research¹², an independent research consultancy, was appointed to analyse the public consultation responses, the results of which are presented here. The findings of this report played a key role in enabling the Advisor to prepare his report and recommendations.

The Consultation Activities

The public consultation was open for an eight-week period, from 30 September to 26 November 2021. This invited responses to a consultation document via the Scottish Government's consultation portal, Citizen Space, as well as offering the opportunity to submit feedback via email. A series of webinars and allied meetings were also undertaken to gather further feedback.

⁵ [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#)

⁶ [OECD review backs school curriculum - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁷ [OECD iLibrary | Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

⁸ [Broad general education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)

⁹ [Senior Phase | Senior Phase and beyond | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)

¹⁰ [Education Reform: Consultation on Behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹¹ [Advisor to the Scottish Government on the reform of SQA and Education Scotland: remit - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹² www.wellsideresearch.co.uk

The consultation document contained 32 questions, including 11 closed and 21 open questions. It included questions relating to Scotland's education system and sought feedback on the proposed changes to the national education agencies.

Response Rate and Profile

In total, **851 responses** were received to the consultation. This consisted of:

- **690 responses to the main consultation document** or set questions. Of these, **649** were received via Citizen Space and **41** were received via email;
- **74 responses submitted by email**, which took the form of letters and other formats and did not follow the consultation questions set; and
- **notes from 87 meetings and webinars**¹³.

Of the 764 respondents who submitted responses via Citizen Space or email, most were categorised as individuals (n=539, 71%), 61 (8%) had replied on behalf of a group (often of teachers or parents/carers), and 164 (21%) represented an organisation.

These respondents' role/interest within the education sector and which educational stage they represented/had an interest in was also determined (full details can be found in **Appendix A**). A wide range of different organisations/sectors were represented, while nearly two thirds of individual and group respondents identified themselves as a teacher/lecturer/practitioner (n=390, 65%), and just under half of all respondents (n=354, 46%) had links to/an interest in secondary school level, while 21% (n=159) had links to/an interest in primary school level. Lower responses were received for those with links to/an interest in Early Years (n=22, 3%) and Further/Higher education (n=57, 7%).

It should be stressed, however, that many of the additional meetings and webinars undertaken by Professor Muir involved multiple contributors, and a number of consultation responses represented groups of contributors and/or wider consultation with members or stakeholder groups. For example, a webinar which engaged with parents/carers represented 418 attendees, with parent councils and other bodies consulting with a wider range of parents/carers to develop their responses. Therefore, the exact number of people who provided feedback to the consultation is unknown, but can be assumed to be higher than the numbers outlined above.

Methodology

The analysis and reporting of responses was carried out independently by a research team contracted by the Scottish Government.

¹³ An online survey of young people was also conducted, the results of which have been analysed separately and are not included within this report.

All responses were logged into a database and screened to identify any campaign, blank, duplicate or non-valid responses (i.e. where responses were not relevant to the current consultation). No duplicates or non-valid responses were identified and only one blank response was screened out. Feedback was then analysed, to be presented under the appropriate sections below.

Closed question responses were quantified and the number of respondents who selected each response option is reported. Both the raw percentage and the valid percentage are shown (i.e. the percentage of people who responded to each option once the non-respondents had been removed).

Qualitative comments given at each question were read in their entirety and manually examined to identify the range of themes and issues discussed. Analysis was also conducted to identify any differences in views between respondent groups (i.e. between individuals and organisations, organisational sectors, roles, and the different educational stages represented). Recurring themes that emerged throughout the consultation were recorded, and verbatim quotes were extracted in some cases to illustrate findings. Only extracts where the respondent consented for their response to be published were used.

Caveats

Findings are presented as they relate to each question in the consultation. Where individual respondents offered views at the open questions that differed from those submitted by organisations, or where views differed between the different organisational or educational sectors or respondent roles, this was identified and outlined in the narrative of the report. It should be noted, however, that views tended to be replicated between a wide range of respondent types.

Disaggregate analysis was also confounded by the overlap in respondent roles. For example, a large number of individual respondents replying on a personal level also worked in a professional capacity within the education system. For example, the views of individual teachers were not significantly different from teachers who had submitted a group response, or from the organisational responses of schools. Similarly, the views of those who responded as individuals but worked for a National Agency or Local Government were often similar to the official organisational responses.

Some respondents opted not to answer closed questions but did offer open-ended responses to the same question, meaning that there was not always a direct correlation between the number of people who supported/did not support a particular statement and the number of people who gave a qualifying comment. For fullness, all responses were included in the analysis, even where the closed component of the question had not been answered.

A thematic analysis approach was taken for all qualitative data submitted, rather than attempting to quantify and attribute open-ended data to codes. In order to provide an indication of the strength of feelings expressed, where reference is

made in the report to 'a few' respondents, this typically relates to 10 or less; 'several' refers to 10-20; 'some' respondents would be 20-50, and 'many' would be 50+ respondents. It is important to stress that, although the overall numbers of respondents was large, the numbers providing comments at individual questions varied, as did the number and range of topics discussed at each. While these measures may seem small as an overall proportion of the total number of responses received, they nonetheless represent a large proportion of the various topics discussed. It should also be noted that some respondents gave feedback in response to some questions that was more relevant for inclusion at other parts of the consultation, and so these numbers may reflect views given not only in response to specific questions, but across the board.

While some meeting and webinar discussions followed the questions set out in the consultation documents, others did not. However, there was general consistency in views and experiences expressed across all response methods (i.e. Citizen Space, non-standard email responses, meetings and webinars). As such, the qualitative results discussed in the following chapters reflect all responses provided.

There was evidence of some respondents participating in the consultation in multiple ways, for example, submitting a consultation response and attending meetings. In such cases, all input has been considered and included here for completeness, but this should be borne in mind when considering the results.

Finally, the findings here reflect only the views of those who chose to respond to this consultation. It should be noted that respondents to a consultation are a self-selecting group. The findings should not, therefore, be considered as representative of the views of the wider population.

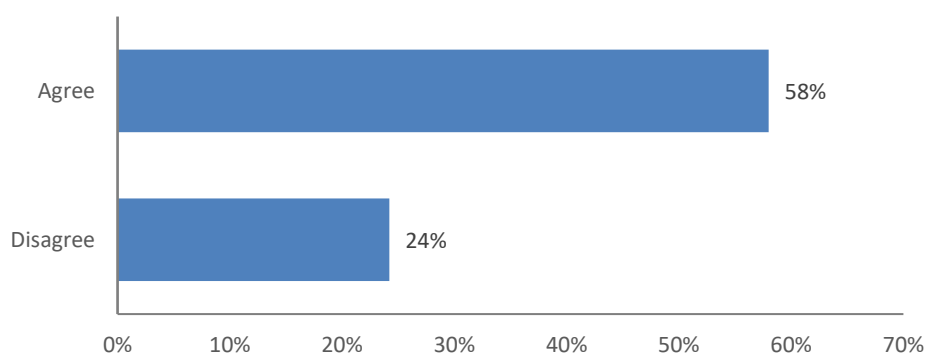
Section 1 - Vision

The consultation document noted that there have been marked changes in educational research since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), giving rise to new insights into children and young people’s learning, pedagogy, and the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to progress as learners. The first section of the consultation focused on two key questions which sought feedback on whether the vision for the CfE reflects what matters for the education of children and young people, and suggestions on what should be retained or changed.

Q1.1 The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland

Respondents to the online consultation were asked to rate how much they agreed that the vision for CfE reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland. The full breakdown of results is provided in **Appendix B**, but the figure below shows that over half (n=396, 58%) of all respondents who based their responses on the consultation paper either agreed or strongly agreed, compared to around a quarter (n=167, 24%) who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 14% (n=100) provided a neutral rating, and 4% (n=27) did not provide a response.

Figure 1: Level of agreement/disagreement that the Vision for CfE reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland



Q1.2 What should be retained or changed

Across all response formats, there was a general sense of support for the CfE. In particular, many respondents mentioned their appreciation of the four capacities covered by the CfE¹⁴, and the inclusion of skills-based elements. Such respondents were keen to see these retained:

“The four capacities are based around skills that are transferable and this rings true with children and young people that all develop at different rates

¹⁴ These include: successful learner, confident individual, effective contributor and responsible citizen.

- definitely retain these.” (Individual, Local Authority/ Regional Officer, Early Years)

It was generally felt that the principles of the CfE were sound, and that it worked well at the BGE level, but that delivery and evaluation, particularly in secondary school, often proved problematic. It was felt that the focus in the senior secondary stage (i.e. S4 to S6) was on assessment and attainment to the detriment of all other capacities. Many respondents (across all response formats) discussed the need for significant change in the secondary education system in order to meet CfE aims and to ensure that other attributes and achievements are valued:

“The prevailing opinion given regarding the four capacities... is that whilst they are excellent in principle, they are easier to achieve in primary school than in secondary school, where the focus switches to exams very quickly. The four capacities need to apply to the Senior Phase as well...”
(Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Despite overall confidence in the CfE, other areas where respondents suggested there were issues or room for improvements included:

- perceptions that the current system was too flexible/open to misinterpretation. It was felt that the system needed more structure, to provide a consistent approach and for opportunities to be provided equally between schools/ across the country. Although others discussed the need for continued freedom for schools and teachers to interpret and deliver content in a way that they feel to be most appropriate for their students.
- concerns that the CfE was presented in a way that was not readily accessible to all. It was suggested that it should be re-written using clear and concise language that can be understood by stakeholders at all levels.
- a need for continued, if not increased focus on literacy and numeracy to ensure that all children are able to read and write by the time they reach secondary education (this was an issue that was mentioned at several points throughout the consultation).
- a need for increased focus on soft/vocational skills to facilitate pupil transition into life beyond education. This was often linked to the capacity “responsible citizen”.

Finally, there were a few respondents (again across all response formats) who, despite their agreement with the CfE, suggested looking for inspiration from other education systems around the world (indeed, the value of learning from different countries was a common theme across the consultation):

“We need to look at the vision in place in England which is at least coherent across the entire school career, or in Norway where the vision is articulated clearly and apolitically.” (Individual, Parent/Carer, Secondary School)

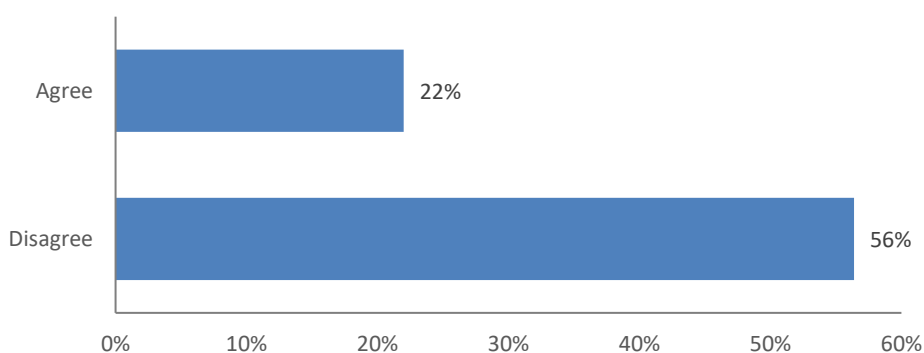
Section 2 - Curriculum and Assessment

Section 2 of the consultation document focused on the need to align curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation in order to deliver on the commitments made in Curriculum for Excellence relating to assessment. It sought feedback on seven question/topic areas related to curriculum and assessment, with the results set out below. Again, views and experiences were largely consistent across the different response formats.

Q2.1 Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions

Respondents to the online consultation were asked to rate how much they agreed that the CfE provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners that gives them the best possible educational experiences and enables them to realise their ambitions. The figure below shows that over half (n=389, 56%) of all respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared to less than a quarter who agreed or strongly agreed (n=147, 22%). A further 18% (n=124) provided a neutral rating, and 4% (n=30) did not provide a response.

Figure 2: Level of agreement/disagreement that the CfE provides a coherent progression in journey of learners that gives them the best possible educational experiences and enables them to realise their ambitions



Q2.2 Elements which currently contribute to a coherent progression

While Q2.2 asked what respondents believed 'currently contributes' to a coherent progression, very few focused on this in their response. Rather, the majority of responses focussed on issues and concerns about progression, with some respondents clearly stating that they felt there was currently no coherent progression.

Many respondents commented on benchmarks and suggested that benchmarks offered structure and the opportunity to track a child's development. There was a belief that benchmarks contribute greatly to coherent progression but there was not enough clarity to use them effectively and consistently across settings. Some respondents felt that benchmarks were more difficult to use in the Senior Phase

and that clearer, more rigid benchmarks would provide benefit in the teaching, tracking, consistency and clarity of reporting on progression:

“A coherent progression should include clear benchmarks where there can be no ambiguity and standards are equitable throughout authority and country, e.g. all teachers have a clear understanding of requirement for each benchmark reached - not open to personal interpretation and opinion.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Primary School)

There were other respondents, however, who believed that benchmarking had become a ‘tick-box’ exercise. It was also suggested that the Senior Phase and assessments in particular were too rigid and offered little for those pupils who were unable to excel under traditional learning/exam-based formats:

“In the SP [Senior Phase], the focus is on exams and assessment. There is no space in the curriculum for creativity and enabling pupils to have some autonomy in what/how they learn. Despite a focus being on pupils 'leading their own learning' and personalisation and choice' this does not happen in the SP.” (Individual, Teacher/ Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Experiences and outcomes (Es and Os) were also discussed by many respondents. Some felt that they, along with benchmarks, aid coherent progression, but others felt that their definitions were too vague and that they did not map well to qualifications. There was a general concern amongst respondents that Es and Os (and CfE in general) left too much room for interpretation which in turn generated an inconsistency between settings.

Q2.3 Suggestions to improve learner progression across stages and sectors

Respondents were also asked to share ideas to improve learner progression across stages and sectors. The issues outlined below reflect the views across all response formats.

Many felt that there should be clear and comprehensive national guidelines to ensure accurate and consistent delivery of the curriculum:

“The E&Os across all levels do not specify clearly what pupils need to know, do, or understand. As a result, the content of the broad national curriculum has not been adequately defined to then allow teachers to work confidently and consistently within it.” (Individual, Other Role, Secondary School)

Transitions between stages of education were also discussed by many respondents, and linked to incoherent progression. Respondents felt that more clear and open communication between teachers/practitioners, schools and authorities would aid consistent and coherent progression through transitions, and that there should be more time and opportunity for teachers/practitioners at either side of transitions to communicate regarding pupil development. In terms of

transitions between sectors, it was also suggested that play should be given more weight in the curriculum to ease the transition from early years settings to school, and that secondary school pupils should be given genuine exposure to further/higher education settings and feedback sought from those who have previously made this transition.

A change to the structure or focus in secondary schools was also discussed by some respondents. This included introducing smaller, 'low level' exams from S1 onwards to acclimatise pupils to a new style of teaching and assessment, as well as using more continuous assessment methods in the Senior Phase. Others suggested that qualifications should start in S3. Conversely, many others stressed that pupils should be allowed to experience a rich and varied curriculum for as long as possible.

Similarly, some detailed the need for more holistic education and assessment, a more pupil-led Senior Phase, and an increase in vocational education. The general feeling was that so much focus was given to passing exams that attention on other aspects of personal development was lost. It was also noted that not all pupils fare well through traditional examinations, some have additional support needs, and not all want to go on to higher education. As such, it was felt that a significant number of pupils could instead excel on an alternative, more vocational trajectory:

“...for the vast majority of pupils, what is needed is a broader academic curriculum in the Senior Phase and also the opportunity to develop life skills, skills relevant to employment, vocational skills etc.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Further, it was suggested that the Senior Phase of secondary school did not adequately prepare students for life beyond education, and that perhaps businesses could engage more with schools to offer insight, work placements and opportunity for employment.

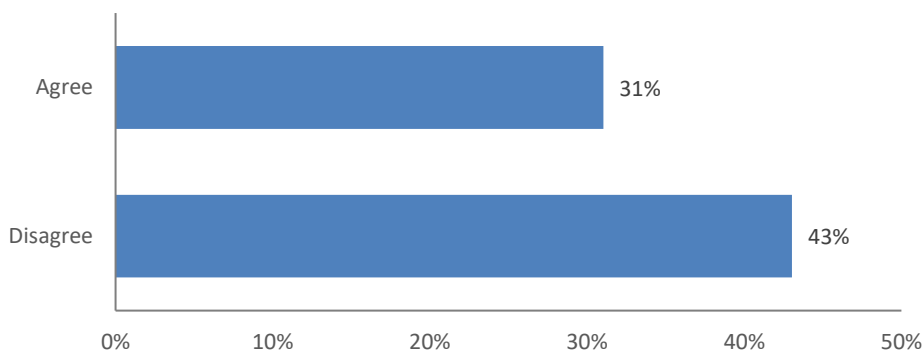
Some respondents commented on class sizes, stating that reduced class sizes and increased numbers of teaching assistants would benefit learners and improve progression. There was also mention of reduced class contact time, as well as increased investment in continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers/practitioners.

Again, many respondents discussed standards of literacy and numeracy and felt that with a broad curriculum these core skills were not given the focus they needed - especially in the BGE phase. Suggestions to improve this included calls for clear guidelines regarding the curriculum, but also for strict benchmarking/testing.

Q3.1 In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners

Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed with the above statement. Less than a third (n=210, 31%) of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while 43% (n=297) disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 21% (n=146) provided a neutral rating, and 5% (n=37) did not provide a response.

Figure 3: Level of agreement/disagreement that, in practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by CfE to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners



Q3.2 Suggestions on what is needed to enhance this in future

Respondents were asked to detail any suggestions they had around how to enhance the empowerment of learning communities to ensure they use the autonomy provided by CfE to design a curriculum that meets learners needs.

By far the most commonly mentioned issue was resources. Many felt that additional staffing was needed as well as additional resources to develop and deliver effective, individualised and well prepared learning opportunities:

“...we do not currently have the staff nor facilities on the ground to implement it as intended... focus is being thrown on the curriculum design rather than the circumstances in which it is expected to be delivered. The issue is not the content of education, the issue is the environment (social/cultural) in which it is expected to be delivered.” (Individual, National Agency Officer)

Training and support were also cited as crucial, not only for CPD but to build confidence in delivering learning within a local context. Some mentioned the need for a national resource for teacher/practitioner training, whilst others commented on the fact that many school managers lacked a nuanced understanding of the issues experienced in the classroom. It was argued that teachers/practitioners also needed more preparation time for curriculum activities.

It was also felt by many that the curriculum was currently curtailed by paperwork, inspections, frequent new initiatives, and other ‘tick-box’ exercises, and that this

level of scrutiny undermined autonomy and teacher/practitioner confidence to deliver:

“More flexibility needed. Constrained by the 'ticky' box exercises. Not enough time given to teach content in depth.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School)

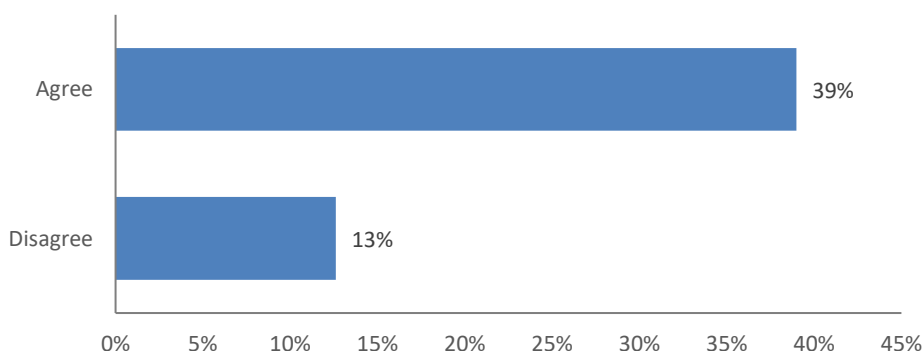
Many respondents suggested that Scotland was ‘reinventing the wheel’ in terms of modifying the education system over in recent decades, and there was a call for consistency across and within schools and local authorities. It was suggested that for this to work effectively, there would need to be **one** set of clear national guidelines which all schools and teachers/practitioners could draw on, without undermining local autonomy and flexibility.

Structured inter- and intra-school collaboration, including between primary and secondary sectors, was another common theme. Consistent with Q2.3, many respondents mentioned collaboration with outside agencies and businesses with an interest in supporting or employing young people. Several suggested that the curriculum should fit with future job prospects, whether academic or vocational. Evidencing (with examples in the guidelines) and sharing good practice nationally was also seen as important in keeping the curriculum focused and effective.

Q4.1 The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report

Respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed that the creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report. Around two in five respondents (n=269, 39%) either agreed or strongly agreed, while 13% (n=87) disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 41% (n=284) provided a neutral rating, and 7% (n=50) did not provide a response.

Figure 4: Level of agreement/disagreement that the creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment



Although respondents were asked to cite perceived advantages (Q4.2) and disadvantages (Q4.3) of the proposed agency, many commented more broadly on the rationale and prerequisites for, as well as barriers to, having a new agency.

Need for wider reforms

Across all response formats, several respondents argued that a deeper and broader discussion of Scottish education needed to take place before proposing a new agency (a common theme reiterated across the consultation questions):

“It seems that it has already been decided to have this agency without asking what we actually need and then devising what that might look like. I don't believe a new agency will do this unless we have a wide-reaching debate about what we want from our education system and then see how we might deliver that.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government).

Even those respondents who agreed or were neutral about the proposed agency, indicated this was partly because they saw the current model as flawed and saw this as an opportunity to review this, as opposed to being overly enthusiastic about the setup of any new body per se:

“We have a long history of creating agencies designed to promote and support schools and teachers, but these have often become bureaucratic bodies focussed on the wrong things.” (Individual, Other Role).

Those who were neutral or disagreed with the proposed new agency argued that the SQA should be retained (something which also featured in response to later consultation questions).

Establishing a new Agency

While it was welcomed that the agency would potentially promote 'streamlining' and 'collaboration', it was also stressed that it needed a remit, aims, objectives and national standards that were clear and negotiated with all stakeholders (including children, young people, parents/carers, teachers/practitioners/lecturers, youth workers and others across the education sectors). It was also felt that more resources would inevitably be needed.

It was stressed by some respondents that, should a Curriculum and Assessment Agency be established, then it would be important for this to be independent of government and other current agencies - a sentiment echoed across all response formats and throughout the consultation:

“If the agency is independent of politics, political parties and other bodies, and its sole purpose is to improve education, then this could work.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School).

One of the most commonly cited provisos for the new agency, again proposed across all response formats, was that current teachers/practitioners/lecturers and

youth workers should be involved as staff within the new agency (whether or not seconded):

“If the same core of people are involved, I don’t think things will change. There needs to be regular secondment of staff with recent experience in schools. It’s the real-life experience as a classroom teacher and/or senior leader in a school that can make the biggest difference to schools and therefore to learners. They would bring insight into the strengths and weaknesses of curriculum design and modelling and how assessment can validate learner experience and development.” (Organisation, Secondary School).

Many respondents were keen to stress that ‘learning’ should be included not only in the title of the new agency, but in its remit as well, to include the four capacities, pedagogy, and skills outwith subject certification. Whilst most thought that the curriculum should drive assessment and that exams were not the only measure of success, others argued that ‘knowledge’ was equally important.

The perceived advantages and disadvantages are outlined below and represent comments provided across the different response formats.

Q4.2 Potential advantages of establishing such an Agency

The vast majority of cited advantages of a new curriculum and assessment agency were around offering greater consistency, clarity, coherence and continuity:

“One agency with a strong vision and mission for the future is better than two pulling in different directions.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

In terms of advantages for the teaching profession, it was felt that a new agency could increase teacher/practitioner confidence, through providing high quality resources and support, as well as addressing long-standing workload issues. Opportunities for teacher/practitioner secondment were also welcomed.

It was also felt that an agency could possibly ensure a seamless 3-18 curriculum and a smoother transition from BGE to the Senior Phase for learners, would be fairer for students, and would (with the provisos above) align the curriculum with assessment:

“If the agency is established with teachers included, alongside parties from all angles and agencies then we could establish an effective progression and meaningful links between BGE and Senior Phase, and curriculum and assessment. Assessment and pedagogy informs curriculum, and likewise curriculum informs assessment and pedagogy. With an agency that understands and appreciates this we could create an empowering and effective curriculum for our pupils.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Q4.3 Potential disadvantages of establishing such an Agency

Several respondents were somewhat sceptical of any new agency and were worried that they had 'been here before' or that there was a danger that this proposal would simply be a 'rebranding' of past agencies (SQA in particular). There were concerns that things would not change but there would be yet more bureaucracy. Indeed, the term 'rearranging the deckchairs' was noted several times, reflecting the view that a new agency would not change things:

"If assessment and accreditation continues to drive the curriculum we may find ourselves with a better-structured organisation that continues to prioritise the wrong things, just a bit more effectively." (Group, School/Centre Leader, Secondary School)

Several respondents also suggested it would take too long to set up a new agency and that it would cost too much to deliver. Others noted that the services provided by the SQA currently were wider reaching than simply the school sector, but highlighted that the services to these other sectors were not necessarily problematic. This resulted in concerns that these sectors could be negatively impacted during/by the reforms.

In terms of teaching staff, it was suggested that, while the new agency would operate best if staffed by teachers/practitioners, this was unrealistic as they were already working beyond capacity and could lead to further overload. There was also a perception that the new agency may undermine professional judgement by being overly prescriptive and further alienate teachers/practitioners. Some also expressed concerns that, if SQA staff were disbanded (or redeployed), high quality staff from that organisation may be lost.

Several respondents were concerned about the impact of changes on the structure of education or priority placed on particular elements. Some were concerned that the proposed agency may lessen the importance of assessments in the Senior Phase in order to focus more on the CfE, others were concerned that certain subjects may be prioritised (e.g. STEM subjects), while yet others worried that vocational skills would lose out:

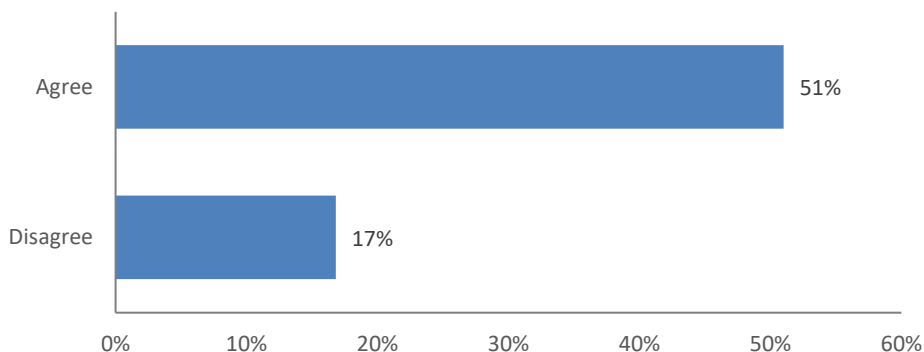
"I think that forcing the CfE "vision" into the Senior Phase... is going to result in a lowering in the quality of educational standards in the Senior Phase. Already pupils have reduced the number of subjects which are studied in S4. Putting more CfE "vision" into their curriculum is going to have an impact on reducing the scope, depth and breadth that they can learn at this time." (Individual, Parent/Carer, Secondary School)

Q5.1 The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools

When asked about whether the full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools, just over half of all respondents (n=356, 51%) agreed this was the case, while 17% (n=116) disagreed.

A further 22% (n=151) provided a neutral rating, and 10% (n=67) did not provide a response.

Figure 5: Level of agreement/disagreement that the full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools



Q5.2 Factors that support a broader range of SQA qualifications being included in the curriculum in secondary schools

Although Q5.1 asked respondents whether the **existing** range of SQA qualifications played an important part in the secondary curriculum, Q5.2 implies that an even broader range should be included. Many respondents, for example, noted that a broader range of SQA qualifications was **not** required, while some also highlighted that there were qualifications other than those linked to the SQA:

“They already have a wide range of qualifications which can be offered in secondary schools. The challenge is how these are included in the curriculum with parity of esteem and recognition by employers, universities and colleges.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government).

Whilst many thought that SQA had an adequate breadth of qualifications currently, some felt that these and the subject areas needed to be updated. Others felt that many schools did not use the full suite of existing qualifications from SQA and were thus unlikely to benefit from more. Some worried that to bring in yet more quantity would only serve to dilute quality or distract from embedding core skills.

For the majority of respondents who concurred that more qualifications were needed (not only from SQA), however, the emphasis was on ‘parity of esteem’, through offering vocational, creative and life skills, as well as academic skills. It was felt this was needed to provide pupil choice, personalisation, and greater opportunities for ASN pupils and less academic pupils to achieve:

“I think there is a need for more practical qualifications. These qualifications should not be seen as inferior to the more traditional academic qualifications.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School).

On the proviso that more vocational qualifications could be introduced without diluting the curriculum, several respondents suggested that the current aim to sit six

National 5s were too limiting, and should be increased again to eight, that more language qualifications were needed, more unit only passes, more core literacy and numeracy teaching in the earlier years of primary and secondary, and more of a baccalaureate approach to assessment.

Funding and resourcing were seen as challenges. Respondents noted the disparity in resources between rural and urban schools and between private and state schools. In order to offer a broader range of qualifications it was felt that teachers/practitioners would have to be appropriately trained and qualified, preferably specialising in more than one subject, and there would need to be a significant increase in staffing. Several also commented on the rapidly changing workplace and emerging technologies.

Another key theme was collaboration, namely that more links needed to be made between schools, further/higher education, employers and wider communities. A few suggested the possibility of certain schools becoming centres of excellence for a 'consortium of schools' (including e-learning to promote access) and using apprenticeships and existing industry qualifications as templates (e.g. in trades subjects).

The broad consensus, however, was that more qualifications in a broader range of subjects was welcomed:

"The inclusion of a broader range of SQA qualifications... will support greater choice and have the potential to offer greater agency for young people in determining a pathway that is most appropriate to their aspirations, strengths and interests... leading to a better balance of academic and vocational options in the Senior Phase in particular."
(Organisation, Third Sector)

Q5.3 Suggestions on what is needed to enhance the role of a broader variety of qualifications in the curriculum in secondary schools

This question was, to a certain extent, answered above, although one respondent summed up the challenges as follows:

"Where does time come from to further broaden the curriculum? Too much is being squeezed in just now, meaning pace is too fast for many, or there is little time for deep exploring, application and mastery. If qualifications are to be broadened, the BGE, first to third level, will need to put the building blocks in place - or there is a risk new learning is rushed or only available to the highest achievers." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School).

Other suggestions on how to enhance a broader suite of qualifications included:

- national guidance on mapping qualifications;
- universities being encouraged to welcome a wider range of qualifications;
- reintroducing standard grades;

- separating out the regulatory and awarding remits of SQA; and
- reviewing the role of insight.

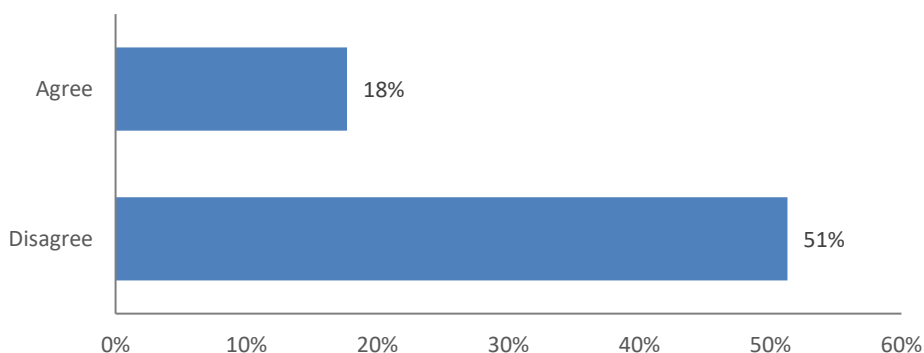
In sum, one respondent outlined the interconnected concerns as follows:

“We need a better range of opportunities for senior students to develop more varied skills... We need more opportunities for young people to work collaboratively and to demonstrate technology skills, and they need to be allowed to achieve depth in learning, rather than limiting themselves to the narrow range of skills which can be tested through an exam. We need better CPD for staff; better access to technology for remote learning; small class sizes to allow effective collaboration and responsive teaching; proper funding to allow us to do exciting, adventurous things with young people; good quality networking opportunities and access to exemplification of standards in unfamiliar qualifications.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Q6.1 Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments

Conversely to Q5, just over half of all respondents (n=354, 51%) disagreed that technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments, compared to 18% (n=122) who agreed. A further 23% (n=157) provided a neutral rating, and 8% (n=57) did not provide a response.

Figure 6: Level of agreement/disagreement that technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments



Q6.2 Comments on the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessments, and delivering improvements

Responses to this question were largely restricted to those who answered the main consultation document, this issue was not generally discussed in any detail during the meetings which were held.

Respondents were generally positive about the scope of utilising technology in education going forward. It was suggested that the changes which had been forced upon the profession during the COVID-19 pandemic should be viewed as an

opportunity and that the momentum should not be lost. It was felt that technology could provide benefits for all young people across many aspects, including:

- facilitating access to lessons and assessments when a pupil is out of school for extended periods (seen as particularly supportive for those with physical or mental health issues);
- providing remote access to areas of the curriculum and qualifications offered in other schools (seen as particularly supportive for those in rural areas);
- providing learning and assessment methods which are more closely aligned with pupils' skills, as well as higher education and workplace settings; and providing in-class support for neurodivergent learners:

“I work with many children with dyslexia who would greatly benefit from the use of technologies such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, Clicker for writing, iPads, etc. However, these are not utilised widely, and these children continue to have literacy as a barrier.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School)

Benefits for teachers/practitioners were also outlined. Key among these was the ability to access a wider range of remote learning/training programmes - again seen as particularly beneficial for those based in rural areas. Other potential benefits included the creation of networking, collaboration and resource sharing opportunities.

However, it was felt that technology had not been appropriately prioritised nor invested in previously, and as a result schools and agencies were now playing 'catch up'. Current barriers to successful and equitable roll-out were highlighted. This included access to physical infrastructure and resources such as access to hardware, software, and sufficient broadband, both in schools and for families at home. It was also highlighted that current technology was not always suitable for students with additional support needs, and that investment and support in this area was necessary. It was noted that teachers/practitioners can struggle to know how to adapt resources to meet specific needs, and that differences in the technologies available in and out of school limited pupil ability and created added stress.

Staff skills and confidence were also felt to be variable, and so ongoing training and support would be required to ensure all teachers/practitioners were confident in developing and tailoring materials and integrating technology into lessons:

“A structured, tiered, national professional learning programme for staff in digitally supporting learning and teaching is needed to continue to build on the skills developed in the last 2 years.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Some suggested that a national approach was needed to eLearning resource development. Respondents recommended that high quality, nationally standardised digital resources should be made available to all teachers/practitioners, as the process of finding, testing and engaging with online resources was noted to take a

significant amount of time. A few stressed that Gaelic Medium Education should also be considered when resourcing reviews and evaluations were undertaken.

Further, it was suggested that online curriculum and assessments should be developed by a central team. Indeed, there were calls for assignments and assessments to be more innovative, with scope for the development of a full range of e-assessment platforms. Engaging technology was also considered an opportunity to access analytical data to track student and class progress. Creating universal digital papers for all assessments would reduce the need for individual schools to invest in creating their own. Having centrally based resources could allow pupils to complete the assignments when they were prepared fully for them rather than in line with their classmates.

While recognising the value of technology, however, some felt there should be balance within teaching environments and that the value of in-person learning should be acknowledged. Others argued that moving the current style of assessment online was not an appropriate next step for technology development.

Finally, consistent with comments elsewhere, when developing digital resources, respondents felt it was important to consider existing evidence, and that pupil experiences of eLearning should be considered and impact future decisions.

Q7 Additional comments on curriculum and assessment

Respondents were given the opportunity to add any additional comments about the curriculum and assessment. Whilst some introduced new issues, most reiterated comments from earlier questions. Although there were some common issues, several hundred respondents gave individual and broad-ranging answers, with very few commonalities. Again, comments below reflect those outlined across all response formats.

There was general agreement, however, that the curriculum should be streamlined nationally, to avoid the variability within and between local authorities. It was also argued that the curriculum needed to state clearly and simply the content and potential outcomes across all educational stages. Throughout Section 2, respondents commented on the benefits of the former Standard Grades and that they should perhaps be reinstated.

It was also argued that the BGE needed to link better with the Senior Phase, and to recognise achievements in a broader sense:

“A core emphasis upon formative assessment in the BGE needs to articulate better with national qualifications in the Senior Phase, and the latter need to be more flexible in order to better reflect the achievements of all children and young people.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Some also noted that Scotland could learn from other countries who performed well in education, such as Finland. It was felt by some that employers in Scotland no

longer trusted the levels of qualifications awarded to its young people, that rote memorisation was unhelpful in the 'real world', and that the curriculum and assessment developments need to happen before any new qualifications framework was developed.

Mixed messages were provided about examinations, but generally there was agreement that exams were necessary and beneficial but should be 'lighter touch' and more equitable, so as not to be seen as elitist. Competitiveness was not seen as a healthy approach, not least when respondents realised that major changes, such as those proposed in the consultation document, would need buy in from all stakeholders.

Many respondents noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the effectiveness of continuous assessments and highlighted the disparities between schools when algorithms were used. However, most respondents agreed that assessments should primarily be done externally, and that an assessment system based purely on teachers' views would be 'rife with inequity'.

Finally, the same provisos discussed above applied when discussing the proposed changes: i.e. a need for increased staffing, smaller class sizes, increased resources, investment in technologies (notably learning from how the tertiary sector adapted to online working in the last two years), and adequate training for staff. It was also suggested by many that any new initiatives should be government led rather than from SQA or Education Scotland.

Section 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

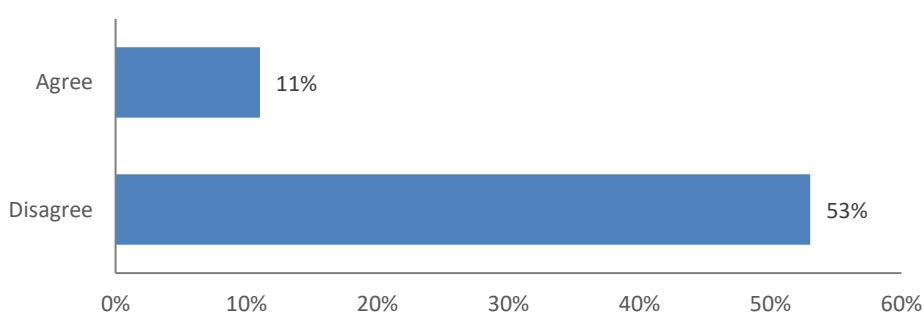
Section 3 of the consultation document outlines the findings from Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future¹⁵ which recognises the complexity in Scottish education and highlights duplication of functions between different groups.

The consultation paper outlines the need to revise the current allocation of responsibility for CfE, including responsibilities for its strategic direction, its reviews and updates, and the response to needs and/or requests for support with curriculum issues. Further, it argues that improved clarity on functions and simplification of guidance for all stakeholders is needed in order to create a more coherent system which is more easily understood by all, allowing a greater focus on learning and teaching. As such, Section 3 asked a series of questions seeking feedback on the roles and responsibilities for the CfE, national agencies and other providers within the Scottish Education system. Again, there were strong correlations in views across the response formats, with qualitative analysis below representing all feedback received.

Q8.1 There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie

When asked to rate their level of agreement that there is clarity on where the responsibility for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE lie, just over half of all respondents disagreed (n=366, 53%), while only 11% (n=76) agreed. A quarter of all respondents (n=171, 25%) provided a neutral rating, and 11% (n=77) did not provide a response.

Figure 7: Level of agreement/disagreement that there is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie



Q8.2 Where responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE should lie

Respondents were asked to identify where they felt responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE should lie. In total, 469 substantive responses were provided from the main consultation, although several others indicated they did not know. It should also be noted that some respondents provided comments in

¹⁵ [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#)

this section that did not relate directly to the question, for example providing details of how they wanted Education Scotland (or other agencies or educational structures) to be reformed. The views below also incorporate those shared in non-standard responses and meetings.

Of those who did provide suggestions regarding where responsibility should lie, common responses included:

- a national body/agency. Many mentioned Education Scotland specifically, or any agency that takes over from it, while others simply stated this needed to be a national agency that was independent from the Scottish Government;
- the Scottish Government;
- schools and teachers/practitioners, who it was felt knew the pupils best and were responsible for implementing the curriculum; and
- all stakeholders, including the range of education organisations/bodies; teachers/practitioners/lecturers across all types of educational establishment and stages; as well as seeking input from pupils/students, parents/carers, business, etc.:

“I do think some thought should be given to the governance structure, in particular which stakeholders are represented. Teachers, lecturers, parents, employers, universities and senior students should be involved in decisions and review.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

There was a split in opinion as to whether the Scottish Government should be responsible for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE. Some felt that the leadership and strategic direction should come from the very top, with the Scottish Government taking the lead and ultimate responsibility. However, others felt that politics and political agendas should be removed from the process, instead preferring an independent national body to take on the responsibility and/or wanted the curriculum to be driven by those with direct and recent experience of teaching (both common views throughout the consultation).

Many stressed the need for agencies to work together/with others. No matter who would be responsible for CfE, it was stressed that they needed to involve and be informed by the full range of stakeholders in order to be effective. Several also suggested that any new agency should also be made up of, or have considerable input from, a wide range of backgrounds and covering all learning stages:

“A politically independent body made up of representatives from all sections of the Scottish Education community from early years right through to Higher Education.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Secondary School)

Several respondents suggested that one way to staff any new agency would be for front-line teachers/professionals, head-teachers, and local authority staff to be seconded either on a short-term or part-time basis and be expected to return to the

classroom to implement the curriculum afterwards. That way they would have current or recent teaching experience, and this would also provide educators with the necessary time to dedicate to developing the curriculum rather than it being in addition to their teaching role (and less possible due to current workloads):

“...the idea of adopting the Welsh Pioneer School Model was popular with practitioners, in school part of the week and working as part of the curriculum system the other. We need to stop the duplication of work at all levels and working in silos. We felt strongly that there needs to be genuine two-way engagement.” (Local Authority/Local Government)

However, a few suggested that, while it was important for educators’ voices and experiences to be considered, responsibility for the strategic direction, reviews and updates of the CfE needed to sit with a nationally dedicated body, as teachers/practitioners did not have time to take on this responsibility.

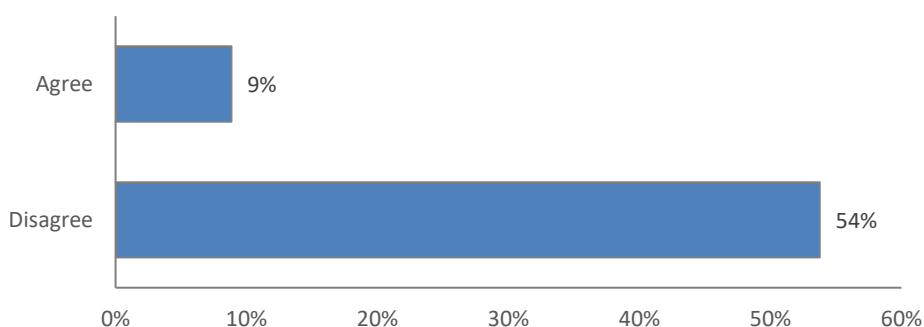
Several also felt that clearer descriptions of different stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities were needed going forward, as well as details on how these should work together and contribute to a set of overarching aims for education. It was felt that this would create clearer ownership and accountability while avoiding the current confusion around roles and variability in delivery.

Regardless of who respondents thought should have ultimate responsibility, there was a strong message that they needed to consult widely and meaningfully with schools, teachers/practitioners and other educators. A ‘bottom-up’ approach appeared to be important.

Q9.1 There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues

Again, just over half of all respondents disagreed (n=371, 54%) that there is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues, while only 9% (n=61) agreed (similar to the results at Q8). A quarter of all respondents (n=173, 25%) provided a neutral rating, and 12% (n=85) did not provide a response.

Figure 8: Level of agreement/disagreement that there is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues



Q9.2 Aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers which is working well

Respondents were asked to comment on which aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers are working well. From those responding to the main consultation document, 389 respondents provided a response. However, 41 (11%) of these were unsure (typically because they felt they did not know the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved), and 47 (12%) felt that there were no areas of support that were currently working well:

“As a day-to-day teacher I am unaware of any support provided by national agencies to any individual pupils or to me.” (Individual, Teacher and Parent)

As a result, 301 respondents went on to provide a substantive response in relation to which areas of support were working well, many of whom indicated a particular agency or initiative which worked well and provided effective support, while others outlined the issues and problems with current support provision. Respondents who provided non-standard responses and who attended meetings provided similar responses which are also captured below.

Supportive aspects

The key agencies or areas for effective support, mentioned by a few respondents (or more) included:

- Education Scotland, both generally and/or specific departments or functions;
- SQA, particularly for secondary schools, again both generally and/or specific departments or functions;
- the Care Inspectorate;
- Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) - while these were welcomed and considered successful in some areas, several felt these had had a limited impact to date;
- Local Authorities;
- various subject specific bodies;
- the National Improvement Framework (NIF);
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership;
- Online learning provision from e-Sgoil and West OS (West Partnership Online School);
- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS); and
- general Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and that provided by The West Partnership and Stepping Stones support for early career teachers/practitioners.

In addition, several respondents (particularly local authorities, but not exclusively) felt that collaboration between national agencies, local authorities and teachers/teacher associations had been particularly effective, both around specific initiatives and more generally. Respondents linked to Gaelic Medium Education felt there was good support available from a range of agencies, including: Fèisean nan Gàidheal, FilmG, Spòrs Gàidhlig, CnaG, and Stòrlann, as was the SQA and Education Scotland. Meanwhile, those in the Early Years sector suggested that the Care Inspectorate, HMle, Early Years Scotland and the Scottish Government were useful sources of support.

For the post school/College/University sector, the learning programmes on leadership from the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) were seen as a success, as was support provided by SQA and Colleges Scotland. The Professional Learning Network and opportunities for online discussion and professional learning/development were also welcomed. The College Development Network and Education Scotland were also seen as providing good input and support, but it was suggested that variability existed.

Discussion of issues/problems with support

While Education Scotland and the SQA were mentioned by some as a source of support, others disagreed and felt that support was either ‘patchy’ (good for some subjects and lacking for others) or had generally ‘dwindled’ over recent years. Several suggested Education Scotland now offered little support to schools, teachers/practitioners and pupils in relation to the curriculum, and/or that the support available varied significantly by area. Several also complained that support had been lacking during the COVID-19 pandemic. While several respondents (particularly secondary school teachers/practitioners/lecturers) noted that the SQA was a good source of support in relation to assessments, they felt that Education Scotland was less helpful in relation to the curriculum.

It was also noted that individual staff and teams within various national organisations were helpful, however it was suggested that this relied too heavily on personal contacts between teachers/practitioners/lecturers and agency staff/teams, and therefore did not provide equity in support across the profession:

“There is feedback from parts of the country which is very positive about the support provided by Education Scotland. However, this is very inconsistent which would suggest that there is not a clear structure/framework for the support to be delivered. It is too reliant on individuals.” (Organisation, Local Authorities/Local Government)

Some respondents suggested that the landscape was too cluttered and ‘piecemeal’, with overlap and duplication of effort, meaning that schools and teachers/practitioners did not know who to approach for support or advice on specific issues. It was felt by many there were too many different agencies developing materials and approaches, with little co-ordination and a lack of time available for schools and educators to fully consider and implement everything:

“There are too many people trying to look busy to justify their job title. They throw ideas at teachers and expect all of the ideas to be implemented in classrooms. There are too many ideas and not enough time.” (Individual, Teacher and Parent, Primary School)

Further, it was suggested that the support and advice provided by national agencies (with the SQA and Education Scotland named specifically), was often provided too late, felt rushed or was subject to later changes.

Education Scotland and the SQA websites were also criticised by a few respondents as being difficult to navigate and not user friendly. It was felt that, while useful material was provided, difficulties with the website meant this was not quick or easy to access.

Q9.3 Where greater clarity is needed in relation to the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs/requests for support with curriculum and assessment issues

When asked to detail where greater clarity was needed in relation to the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs/requests for support with curriculum and assessment issues, a total of 376 respondents to the consultation document provided a substantive response. Similar responses were also provided via the other response formats.

Many respondents felt that clarity was needed around the role, remit, responsibilities, governance and accountability of each agency, as well as information about what each provided and the relationships between them. It was suggested that there was currently overlap in the functions between agencies, and that some had multiple (and perceived to be conflicting) roles, thus making it confusing for teachers/practitioners.

It was also suggested that there were too many contributors and no shared agenda, resulting in fragmented provision, with too much information being provided in some areas and gaps in others. Further, it was felt there was a disconnect between the different educational stages. As such, it was believed the landscape needed to be simplified, or clear mapping/signposting provided so educators can find the relevant information/support. Some respondents called for there to be one over-arching agency with responsibility for education (creating a “one-stop-shop”), while several suggested other agencies could then support in a co-ordinated way. Others sought a decluttered landscape where fewer agencies provided more joined up working and which removed the duplication of effort/roles. Several respondents (typically primary and secondary school teachers/practitioners) requested clear lines of communication and a set of dedicated contacts either to regional teams or subject specific teams who they could approach for support:

“The current landscape is hugely cluttered and there is no clear understanding across the system of the roles/responsibilities of agencies and LAs [local authorities] etc. There is enormous repetition across the system, for example, there are people leading curriculum in their school,

someone leading at the LA [local authority], someone at the RIC [Regional Improvement Collaborative], a team at Education Scotland, with no clarity over roles or the direction.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

It was also felt that awareness raising was required to ensure that the national agencies and other providers are promoted and more visible to front-line educators, who it was noted, often had to rely on their own local management/leadership team. It was also considered important for parents/carers and the general public to be aware of the national agencies and what they do, which would require suitably tailored communication:

“It's very difficult for parents to figure out which agency is responsible for what. The system needs to be far more streamlined, and communication needs to be much more parent friendly.” (Individual, Parent/Carer, Secondary School)

Again, it was suggested that staff in national agencies were ‘too far removed from the classroom’ and therefore did not understand the practicalities of implementing the curriculum. Further, it was suggested that the current educational model did not empower schools, educators and learners, but rather felt like something being done ‘to them’. Again, the bottom-up model of influence in national agencies was considered to be important, with front-line staff being involved/consulted in order to best tailor the support provided. Similarly, local authority based respondents stressed the need for joint working between themselves and national agencies.

Respondents linked to secondary schools also suggested that greater clarity, guidance and information was needed around assessments and marking, and in particular for markers’ meetings to be opened up to non-markers so that all staff had access to the same level of information.

Other issues discussed by several respondents each included:

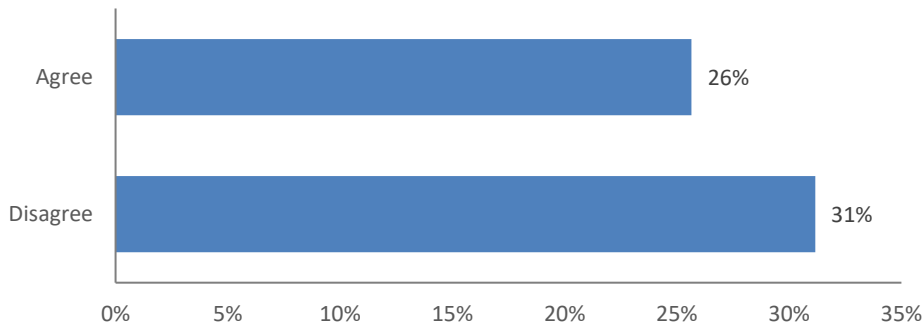
- for greater equality in support to be provided across the country;
- the need for agencies to consider quality and impact when providing resources;
- for expectations to be made clear to educators, along with the provision of implementation support and evidence of good practice;
- academic standards were required at each stage of the curriculum; and
- subject specific support was needed/would be welcomed.

Q10.1 There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners

More mixed responses were provided in relation to whether there is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support teachers/lecturers/practitioners. Around a quarter of all

respondents (n=177, 26%) agreed with the statement, while nearly a third (n=215, 31%) disagreed. A further 28% (n=195) provided a neutral rating, and 15% (n=103) did not answer.

Figure 9: Level of agreement/disagreement that there is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners



Q10.2 Comments on support for leadership and professional learning

Respondents were also asked to provide any comments they had on support for leadership and professional learning, with 417 providing a substantive response. This issue was also discussed in non-standard responses and some meetings with comments reflected below.

Many spoke positively about this and said there was a wide range of opportunities in existence. The increased online offering developed as a result of COVID-19 was also welcomed, with some respondents hoping this would continue long-term. It was also suggested that the online provision had helped to address some of the accessibility disparities across the country (including between rural and urban areas and for those located outwith the central belt), although geographic differences in levels and access to provision was still noted by several respondents as a problem.

However, many others felt that, while lots of professional learning was available, schools and teachers/practitioners were ‘bombarded’ and found it very difficult to identify which providers/options would be most effective and of highest quality. Again, it was suggested that there was a plethora of providers, with little co-ordination and coherence across the offering, and ‘patchy’ provision in some areas. It was argued that a central body needed to take responsibility for sifting, streamlining and assuring quality before onward dissemination to teachers/practitioners:

“PL [Professional Learning] should be coordinated and grouped by ES [Education Scotland] improvement staff and distilled to those busiest and at the front line.” (Individual, National Agency Officer)

Conversely, some respondents felt that there was very little support for leadership and professional learning available, or were unsure what was available or who provided it. Given the other views regarding the cluttered landscape, this may

suggest there is a need for greater, targeted and co-ordinated promotion of opportunities.

Mixed comments were provided in relation to Education Scotland's role in providing leadership and professional learning. Some respondents were positive about its provision (and in particular about the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL)), whilst others felt that SCEL was difficult to navigate, and a few suggested it had lost credibility and trust since being incorporated into Education Scotland.

Funding and time appeared to be the biggest barriers for teachers/practitioners and school leadership in accessing professional learning. Indeed, it was argued that there was no issue with the availability of opportunities for leadership and professional learning, but rather a lack of funding, time and ability to undertake these and implement the learning. It was suggested that funding and resources were needed to allow classroom cover and increased non-contact time to facilitate teachers/practitioners and leadership teams to attend professional learning during the working day:

“We haven't got time to log in to GTCS to browse research. We have no budget to support professional learning opportunities or to pay for cover for these. If we want to take advantage of these opportunities we have to take a day off unpaid and pay the fee ourselves.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

While many respondents spoke favourably about the national leadership pathway programmes available, others felt it would be beneficial to provide reflection on leadership development and preparation for headship as they felt the demands of the 'Into Headship' programme did not give recognition to the experience that those already in post have. Indeed, it was felt this focused too heavily on academia and not enough on practical advice. Rather, it was felt there was a need to support strategic leadership development with a focus on the importance of experiential learning.

Others also felt there was now too much focus on leadership and not enough subject specific development opportunities or focus on effective pedagogy. It was noted that there were gaps by subject area, sector and role:

“...there is barely any nationally or locally available CPD aimed at supporting teachers to improve their classroom practice... we should be regularly reviewing our practice, considering research and discussing how our pedagogy could improve. CPD on this is simply not available to most teachers in Scotland.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Several felt there was little guidance or structure available to change roles or on what training or courses would be needed to progress in their career. Related to this, it was indicated that more opportunities were needed for career progression, for example more principal teacher roles and additional leadership levels in schools/local authorities.

For the Early Years sector, several respondents indicated that there was good support and opportunities for professional learning, but that there were difficulties in accessing these. This included difficulties in attending due to staffing/resourcing issues and the need to meet staff/children ratios in centres. This was particularly an issue for those working in the Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) sector. There were also calls for nationally recognised dedicated professional learning and leadership programmes to be developed and provided, as well as greater “collaborative working and sharing of effective pedagogy and practice” between nursery staff and primary 1 to provide more effective transitions.

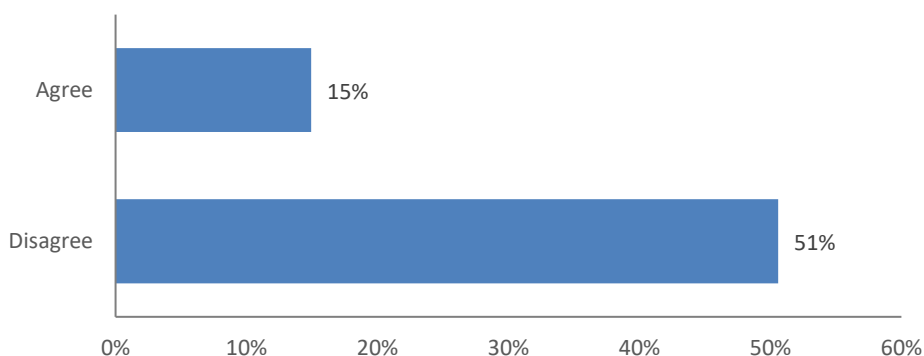
In terms of moving forward, it was suggested that national agencies needed to work collaboratively with local authorities to develop and deliver leadership and professional learning. Several respondents highlighted that peer-to-peer learning and networking, both within a local authority, between areas, and between sectors was a highly effective and impactful approach:

“There should be more opportunities for collaborative support across authorities, which is more possible than ever since the move to remote learning. We have so much to learn from different authorities. But this needs to have leadership; it can't just be left to teachers to work it out among ourselves.” (Individual, Teacher/ Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Q11.1 There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making

Similar to the results at Q8 and Q9 above, around half of all respondents (n=349, 51%) disagreed that there was sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making, while 15% (n=103) agreed. A further 22% (n=155) provided a neutral rating, and 12% (n=83) did not provide a response.

Figure 10: Level of agreement/disagreement that there is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making



Q11.2 Suggestions on how trust and decision making can be further improved

Many respondents felt that their opinions did not matter to decision-makers. The terms 'lip service' and 'tick box' were used by some respondents who felt that consultations (both the current one and more generally) serve to support an existing agenda, and some wrote specifically that they feel they were asked for their opinions **after** decisions had been made:

"We are asked to help make decisions however this is just paying lip service as the decision has already been made by those at the top."
(Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School)

Many respondents felt that trust would increase if stakeholders could be assured that their input was valued. It was felt that they needed to see the results of consultations and that their opinions had indeed been listened to and acted upon:

"We are regularly asked for our views on a range of subjects and yet rarely see these views making a difference and often don't see them reflected in findings." (Individual, Employer/Industry, Early Years)

In addition, many respondents discussed the need for a wide range of stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process, and the need for clarity in publishing and disseminating the results to all. They suggested that clearly identifying decision-makers - and the rationale behind the decisions made - might help to build trust in the process:

"Decision-making needs to involve a wider spread of people (from pupils, parents, teachers, managers, heads of bodies) and then crucially be shared effectively so that all are aware of any said decisions and improvements." (Organisation, Trade Union/ Professional Body)

Regarding the pool of stakeholders for consultation, many respondents felt that including learners and parents/carers in the consultation process would increase engagement and trust. There was also a general feeling that the language and approach of consultation is alienating to many stakeholders. If it were more accessible to pupils and parents/carers, there would likely be a significant increase in engagement and development of trust:

"All information should be readily accessible in a variety of formats aimed at different audiences." (Organisation, Post school sector/ University/College)

Conversely, a few respondents felt that stakeholders who were not professionals, would offer very subjective views, and did not have the experience or expertise to guide educational policy.

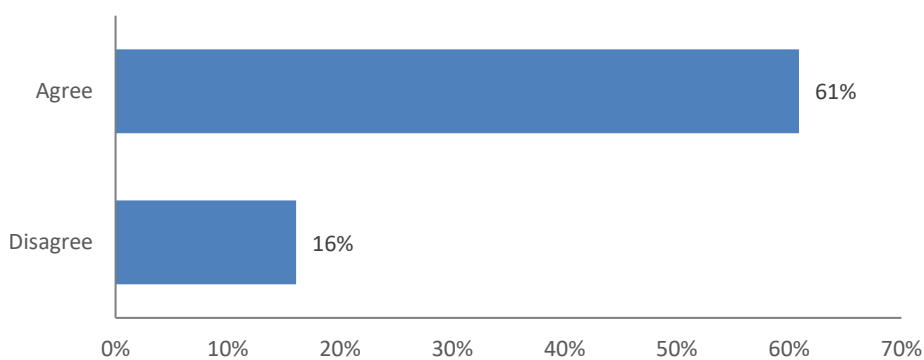
It was clear, however that many respondents felt that teachers/practitioners were routinely ignored and that, as professionals, they should not only be given more

opportunity to be heard, but that their opinions should be listened to, taken on board and lend a genuine contribution to the decision-making process.

Q12.1 Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity

When asked to rate agreement levels with the statement “Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity”, just under two thirds of all respondents (n=420, 61%) agreed and 16% (n=111) disagreed. A further 12% (n=83) provided a neutral rating, and 11% (n=76) did not provide a response.

Figure 11: Level of agreement/disagreement that independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity



Q12.2 Preferences for future scrutiny and evaluation

Respondents were also offered the opportunity to provide examples of how they would like to see scrutiny and evaluation being carried out in future. Overall, 507 respondents to the consultation document provided an answer, while the issue was also discussed across the other response formats as well. It should be noted that there was significant repetition in the views expressed here and those provided at Q14 (which considered the removing inspections from Education Scotland).

Many agreed that there was a need for inspections to both improve experiences for learners and provide parents/carers and the public with confidence in educational establishments. It was argued that the body responsible needed to be independent, both from political influence and that of other agencies/bodies who have responsibility for delivery within the education system:

“It is inappropriate that educational institutions should have responsibility for oversight and scrutiny of their own activity.” (Organisation, Third Sector)

“...an inspectorate that is part of a government body cannot be independent... the inspectorate must be free to criticise policy as it impacts on standards of education as much as to hold schools and heads to account.” (Organisation, Secondary School)

It was felt a system of 'co-creation' was required to develop a new model of teacher/practitioner-led evaluation. Indeed, it was argued that teachers/practitioners, head teachers/heads of centres, and local authorities should be involved in developing any new body or system for inspection. Any new system should feature professional collaboration and promote learning across and between settings. Several respondents wanted inspection/evaluation to develop into something that was done 'with' the profession and not something done 'to' them.

Many respondents stressed the need for any future system to be more supportive of improvement and development and less negative/punitive in nature. It was felt the current system focused too much on 'grading' an establishment, which could be demoralising and was not compatible with an empowered and supportive system. Rather, it was felt that the focus needed to be on the narrative of the report, and a 'critical friend' approach used, to ensure ongoing advice and support for improvements, as well as more sharing of good practice and engendering a culture of encouragement:

"Inspections which concentrate on the negative aspects of a setting cause anxiety, stress and pressure. Members have confirmed that they would find it more beneficial to be advised where they are doing well and how they can be supported to make any improvements needed, to ensure the approach supports a continuous learning journey for the setting."
(Organisation, Early Years)

It was argued that the language around the inspection system also needed to change to be more supportive and focused on 'continuous improvement' and 'capacity building'. For example, it was suggested terms like 'scrutiny' and 'inspection' carried negative connotations which needed to be removed:

"Even the language of 'scrutiny' suggests teaching and learning is being done in a 'wrong' or 'misguided' way and requires to be picked apart. Dropping that language would help." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Some respondents favoured a model that supported self-evaluation, which would value aspects such as collaboration and partnership working between local authorities, schools, ELC and further/higher education settings. Indeed, the Validated Self-Evaluation (VSE) approach was preferred and seen as more valuable by some. It was suggested that enhanced Associate Assessors/Inspectors could be utilised to support such a model, with a few suggesting that head teachers and senior leaders across all local authorities could be trained/involved.

Many also favoured a system of 'peer support' and a model where teachers/practitioners and head teachers could visit and observe lessons in other schools and sectors:

"Peer review and peer marking is essential. We learn best from each other and work best when we are measuring ourselves against our peers."
(Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Many respondents also argued that unannounced visits should be made to ensure the inspection captures the reality of day-to-day business. Others felt that more informal but frequent drop-ins were needed in order to be more supportive and, again, establish a true picture of daily practice:

“It has to be unannounced. Every school can look good for a week. The farce of spending the month before, making teachers stick things on the wall and doctor reports so it looks like we do it every day, when its only ever done for the 5 days of the inspection, is farcical and detracts from learning and teaching.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Others suggested full inspections also needed to happen more often, with no more than five years between them in any given establishment. These also needed to be more focused on observing full lessons and speaking with the majority of the staff. It was also felt that greater and more frequent consultation with parents/carers was needed, and for pupils’ views to be taken into account in a more ‘inclusive’ and ‘meaningful way’.

In addition to calls for an independent inspection body, there was also a perception by some that many current inspectors lacked credibility as they had either not been front-line teachers/practitioners or worked in a local authority, or if they had, had not done so for some time. A few respondents suggested a secondment model would be beneficial, both for teachers/practitioners and head teachers/heads of centres to be seconded to the inspectorate body, and vice versa:

“Overall, there is a shared view that inspections would have greater credibility and impact if carried out by on-the-ground highly experienced and qualified leaders and practitioners who have recent experience of the school system and pressures.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Other issues mentioned by fewer respondents included:

- inspection should be carried out by only one body in the Early Years sector to provide clarity for providers and avoid contradictory messages;
- inspection was needed of both schools and the local authority so that leadership and management from the top was considered; and
- while national consistency needed to be maintained, local authorities should be more involved in inspections to ensure local contexts and priorities are captured.

A few suggested the current system worked well and should be retained, while a few others suggested that the inspection role should be dropped entirely. Those in favour of removing inspection typically referred to other countries which did not have any inspection body but appeared to maintain good reputational education systems.

Q13 Additional comments on roles and responsibilities

Respondents were offered the opportunity to add any additional comments in relation to 'roles and responsibilities in Scotland's education system'. A total of 253 respondents provided an answer, although many repeated issues discussed above.

Key issues that were discussed by several respondents included:

- the need to develop a simplified system throughout, with national bodies free from political influence;
- local authorities, head teachers, teachers/practitioners and schools generally to be more involved in the inspection process;
- clarity around the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and clear information about how all stakeholders will work together;
- an overarching vision for inspection was needed, and it must be clear how each stakeholder contributed to the whole;
- teachers'/practitioners' workload was currently too overwhelming;
- greater inclusion was needed, with more support and resources for ASN and behavioural issues, and greater equality in this respect across the country;
- greater autonomy for local authorities and schools (although a few felt there was too much autonomy in this respect), and greater collaboration between authorities and different sectors, and greater trust in, autonomy and empowerment of teachers/practitioners;
- inspectors to provide more 'hands-on' support for changes that are needed;
- national bodies should not be self-regulating;
- Ministers/Scottish Government to take more responsibility;
- better balance of local vs national support;
- decisions need to be taken as close to the learner as possible;
- some parents/carers argued that responsibility for teaching children certain '(life) skills' should be 'returned to parents/carers' rather than being done in schools, although others wanted to see greater life skills taught in schools;
- better recognition, CPD, and remuneration for support staff; and
- impact of RICs was not felt universally across the country.

Sector specific issues included:

- streamlining regulation for the Early Years sector;
- more opportunities needed for promotion and career progression (particularly at secondary level). Principal Teachers were seen as key to developing and enthusing secondary departments, faculty/curriculum head positions seen as diluting this role, and reducing the opportunities for staff/career progression;

- ensure curriculum aligns with assessment in secondary schools;
- greater consideration of the impact of the review on the further and higher education sector;
- youth work needed to be fully included and better represented in the support provided by national agencies; and
- system needs to improve both English-medium education and Gaelic Medium Education.

Section 4 - Reforming Education Scotland and Replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority

Section four of the consultation paper set out and sought feedback on the four key elements of the reforms, namely:

- Removing inspection from Education Scotland;
- Further reform of Education Scotland;
- Replacing SQA; and
- Considering establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency.

Respondents were asked about each of these in turn, and asked to comment on:

- a) the approach the specific reform should take;
- b) the opportunities the reform could present;
- c) the risks associated with any reform;
- d) how any risks might be mitigated; and
- e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

Respondents who provided non-standard contributions and attended the meetings and webinars also provided comments on these four proposal areas. These comments are incorporated into the relevant sections below.

Q14 Removing inspection from Education Scotland

Of those who responded to the main consultation document, 448 provided a substantive response to this question, with many others either indicating that they were 'unsure' or had no additional comments to make. It should be noted, however, that answers were not restricted to removing the inspection function from Education Scotland alone, with many respondents discussing the other key areas of the reform (which were the subject of later questions). In such cases, data (or relevant excerpts) were analysed under the later questions in this section.

General approach

Across all respondent types, the removal of the inspection function from Education Scotland was widely welcomed, with many of the arguments for this repeating those outlined at Q12.2 above. This included:

- Many respondents feeling there was a clear case for an independent (non-political) national inspectorate;
- That the approach to inspections was in need of fundamental review to make it more 'supportive', 'creative' and 'formative', with a renewed focus on

‘improvement’, ‘support’ and ‘professional collaboration’ at the heart of the process;

- A need to change the language attached to inspections in order to address negative perceptions of the process, with respondents encouraging vocabulary such as ‘self-evaluation’, ‘building capacity’ and ‘supporting improvement’;
- That inspectors should have up-to-date knowledge of the education system, its curriculum and expectations, with more input from those who know the current school education context and the needs of young people; and
- That clearly setting out how different agencies would work together to complement and support one another was especially important in relation to Early Years establishments. Indeed, it was felt that existing inspections needed to be rationalised into a single coherent approach, and should be considered alongside other scrutiny functions that support the oversight and delivery of high-quality settings for children and their families, including registration, variation, complaints and enforcement powers.

Another key theme was that there must be clarity around who has responsibility for monitoring improvement, with clear accountability protocols in place for ensuring that inspection findings are acted upon and result in positive change for learners.

Linked to this, another common theme was that whichever body was responsible for carrying out the inspection function, children and young people should always be at the forefront of the inspection design and outcomes. Others (mainly teachers/lecturers/practitioners and organisations) encouraged active involvement of children and young people in any reforms/changes to inspection processes to ensure these were learner-led.

Comments were also made that whichever body was given responsibility for inspection, it would be important for inspections to take local contexts into account and look at the schools’ previous performance/performance of neighbouring schools (i.e. taking a holistic view of the journey of improvement). It was also felt that high standards of transparency should be in place with clear legal, structural and governance status to ensure positive public perceptions and high levels of confidence in any new inspection regime:

“Inspections should be more holistic and ongoing rather than a sudden pile of pressure and scrutiny in a school over a few weeks up to every ten years. Inspections need to be fairer and realistic in terms of the catchment areas schools are supporting. More local knowledge should be an essential part of an Inspection team.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Establish clarity in respect of the roles and responsibilities between inspection bodies, including the Care Inspectorate and Audit Scotland, was also stressed to avoid any confusion and overlap. Some noted that ELC settings were ‘over-inspected’ and subjected to a number of different inspection processes which could

be confusing, although others urged more regular inspections should be considered.

There were also views that the Inspectorate of Education must have a clear mandate to evaluate and report on quality and improvement in education, including learning, teaching, curriculum and outcomes for learners. A coherent system with primary and secondary colleagues being held to the same standards of accountability was also encouraged.

Again, a small number of respondents questioned the need for an inspection function, suggesting that system improvement had continued despite the lack of inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic, and indicating that inspections could be damaging to teacher/practitioner and pupil morale, with few visible improvements made. Conversely, others, argued that there were many parts of the current inspection process that worked well, and these should not be lost in any reforms.

Opportunities

Several opportunities were cited to create a more dynamic, creative and responsive inspection system, including opportunities to:

- demystify the inspection process and make it more transparent;
- ensure inspectors have greater reach and that individual schools have more regular engagement with inspectors;
- involve inspectors who are evidenced experts in pedagogy/specific subjects and particular school contexts;
- explore if more regular inspections may be a more effective model;
- build in a greater focus on sharing promising innovations/promote the spread of effective practice;
- capitalise on the latest digital technologies to promote and share findings;
- build more cross-linkage into school and college inspection;
- integrate wider health and wellbeing priorities into inspections;
- back up inspections with more in-depth data to provide schools with better insight; and
- explore a common inspection framework in the Early Years sector (although a few stressed they were happy with the existing inspection framework and did not wish to see it being replaced).

There was clear support for exploring different models of inspection including, for example, buddying, peer review and shadowing between schools in local areas; to remove competition and encourage more supportive/collegiate inspection processes; developing more themed inspections; and shifting the focus to local authorities and their capacity to know and support improvement in schools.

Similarly, there was support for exploring different staffing of inspection teams and more collaborative approaches to inspection, for example:

- a slimmed down core of actual inspectors and more associate assessors;
- closer working between local Quality Improvement Officers and inspection teams;
- responsibility being devolved to school level supported by RICs;
- including inspectors in local authority self-evaluation to support professional learning and build capacity;
- making more use of local authority staff for inspections and responsibility for the timings of inspections to be devolved to local authorities; and
- additional capacity for schools to self-evaluate and drive their own improvement:

“Every headteacher should be trained as an Associate Assessor building trust, capability and capacity. This would be an enormous step forward in creating and maintaining a genuinely empowered self-improving system that would deliver more positive outcomes for all concerned, not least our learners. This would also enable a more genuine alignment with a clear and consistent dialogue between the scrutiny body, schools and local authorities.” (Individual, Teacher/ Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Again consistent with the findings at Q12.2, respondents considered this as an opportunity to create more unannounced visits which may provide a more accurate reflection of practice on the ground (rather than planned for/rehearsed visits). Respondents also wanted more practitioners to be involved in inspections, especially those with recent classroom experience or specialist subject expertise (again, a view common among practitioners themselves). Suggestions were also made here (as in other questions) that valuable lessons may be learned from researching successful systems in other countries.

Risks

The most commonly cited risk of the proposal to remove the inspection process from Education Scotland was failure to include all relevant stakeholders in any planning and implementation of change:

“It must be set up in proper consultation with teachers. This does not mean online opportunities like this one. It means face to face, ongoing discussions, where teaching staff have the opportunity to explain their concerns with the authorities.” (Individual, Teacher/ Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Other perceived risks included:

- any move away from a centralised system of inspection may be unfair and introduce local/regional disparities;

- that the reforms are not sufficiently robust and still allow for too much local flexibility around implementation, which may lead to inconsistency/unfairness;
- potential loss or watering down of college sector quality assurances practices;
- that misunderstanding may occur if different agencies are responsible for setting course content, assessing it and inspecting schools;
- lack of staff capacity to implement the change/deliver new inspection model due to recruitment/retention issues likely during the period of transition;
- teacher/practitioner disengagement if it is not clear where decisions come from and what is driving them;
- that the inspection process continues to be seen as adversarial instead of supportive and improvement focussed; and
- that communication around any change is not clear and accessible.

A very specific concern was raised in relation to staff already employed in inspection roles and who may face an uncertain future (with associated potential negative impacts on recruitment to the new agency, as potential candidates are uncertain about future terms and conditions). This, it was said, may also lead to any new agency responsible for inspection being understaffed.

A small number of respondents indicated that they felt there were few or no risks presented by this proposal, only positive opportunities for change - the risks were outweighed by benefits arising from increased credibility and consistency.

Mitigating measures

The main mitigating measures that were cited by respondents included:

- providing strong guidance and support for transitions, including having necessary corporate systems in place quickly in any new inspection agency;
- providing appropriate resourcing and infrastructure across frontline and all support staff to deliver high quality external evaluation activity and positive relationships with stakeholders;
- ongoing consultation and engagement of all relevant stakeholders and possibly including relevant stakeholders in governance boards for any new inspection agency;
- bringing in new staff to avoid perceptions that it is a new agency with the same faces;
- secondment of a diverse range of teachers/practitioners to the inspectorate on a rolling basis to keep things 'fresh', relevant and contemporary;
- evidencing outcomes from inspections/having accountability for improvement to help build and maintain trust in the system; and

- to continue to work on alignment of the different forms of inspection i.e. with the Care Inspectorate to ensure a truly national approach.

Several respondents mentioned the importance of piloting changes as well as employing robust, ongoing and independent monitoring and evaluation which would help to strengthen the role of any inspection agency. This should include a commitment to internal review in any inspection agency and ongoing improvement of the inspection process and model itself.

Q15 Further reform of Education Scotland

When asked to comment on further reform of Education Scotland, a total of 256 substantive responses were received from those who responded to the main consultation document, with a small number also referencing answers to earlier questions instead of providing 'new' comments. Some additional data presented in response to earlier questions were also included in analysis here, as it was more fitting to do so. Similarly, the qualitative discussion below incorporates the views expressed in non-standard responses and the meetings.

General approach

There was considerable consensus between different types of respondents. Comments mainly focused on the need to streamline and clearly define functions and make the purpose, roles and remit of Education Scotland clearer to both teachers/practitioners and the general public (with many respondents, especially teachers/lecturers/practitioners and other individuals, indicating they were currently unclear of the functions of Education Scotland beyond inspection):

“Most people have no idea what Education Scotland does. The organisation is remote and inaccessible and unlike its predecessor seems to serve very limited purpose as it currently exists.” (Individual, Parent/Carer, Secondary)

The reforms were seen as an opportunity to create a single robust body that has responsibility for the strategic direction of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for ages 3-18:

“A single agency for Curriculum, Assessment, Professional Development and Innovation would ensure end-to-end policy development and learning. Taking a silo approach could create additional barriers to progressive change.” (Organisation, Parent Body/Group, Secondary School)

The other main comments included prioritising the learning and teaching function of Education Scotland (including assisting more in the provision of content/materials, adapting existing materials, and advising on the curriculum). Respondents spoke of the need for a focus on schools and classrooms and offering 'practical' support and teacher/practitioner support above all else.

Another common theme was the need to involve all stakeholders in any reform process. It was felt this needed to include consultation and meaningful communication between government and educators so the solution worked for both (ensuring that trained and experienced teachers/practitioners have an influence on shaping the system, as well as parents/carers and pupils):

“Teaching is such a fast-changing environment that changes need to be informed by those delivering the changes.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

The need for skilled and experienced teachers/practitioners from a broad range of fields being represented within any reformed agency was also stressed, as well as specialists offering advice in niche fields (which was seen as absent at present):

“By embedding experienced teachers in the reformed agency teachers could see a genuine impact on their practice and working environment.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

As above, a large number of respondents felt that the inspection function should not be undertaken by Education Scotland, but rather, its main focus should be on support for curricular change and development, along with developing and supporting teaching and learning pedagogy. Several others commented that the ‘support’ role for schools must always be independent from the ‘inspection’ role and that it made sense for these two functions to be housed in separate agencies. Care must be taken, however, not to fall back into old models which also did not work:

“It doesn't feel right that the same organisation who sets out what the curriculum should be then comes along and judges you on how well you are doing... but we need to be careful that by disbanding ES [Education Scotland] in its current form we go back to a system (LTS and HMle) that also didn't work. We need to think deeply about why we changed then, and why we want to change now to make sure we're just not re-inventing a failed model.” (Individual, School/Centre Leader, Primary School)

Several individual respondents questioned if there would be a role for Education Scotland if the inspection function was removed, and suggested that all of the other functions currently held by Education Scotland were duplicating efforts elsewhere (in particular, Scottish Government and local authorities). On this basis, some (mainly teachers/lecturers/practitioners) queried if such a body would be required at all or if it represented an unnecessary additional layer of bureaucracy.

Other comments were made that Education Scotland had lacked appropriate direction and management and that guidance/resources emerging from Education Scotland had lacked a robust research and evidence base. Some comments were made throughout that the previous Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) had perhaps been more effective than Education Scotland, offering better support and better resources to teachers/practitioners, and some (mainly teachers/lecturers/practitioners) suggested reverting back to old models such as that offered by LTS. Although, as outlined above, others did not agree.

Another less commonly expressed view was that multiple organisations holding different responsibilities could be confusing and that there should either be better alignment and integration, e.g. between Education Scotland and SQA, or the establishment of just one overarching agency responsible for everything:

“A single new agency should be responsible for the development, assessment, review and award of qualifications for the curriculum. Separating out responsibility leads to disconnected approaches to their implementation and ineffective communication.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Conversely, a few explicitly argued against the proposal for significant reform and suggested that Education Scotland should continue to exist as an Improvement Agency for the system. Among this minority, respondents were concerned that reforms could result in valuable skills, knowledge, experience and well-established protocols/resources being lost or disrupted. In particular, they stressed that the functions around capacity building and professional learning must be fully supported, retained and enhanced.

Opportunities

There were several suggestions for opportunities presented by a reform of Education Scotland, including the chance to:

- review the balance of functions delivered nationally and functions delivered locally and better align Education Scotland with Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) to provide local solutions to local problems¹⁶;
- offer more accessible/visible local contacts for Education Scotland to support local teachers/practitioners;
- revise the communication strategy for communicating with a range of stakeholders;
- provide greater opportunities for cross authority expertise sharing, training and professional discussion, providing greater consistency, particularly for neighbouring authorities who may have similar demographics and context;
- provide high quality support for curriculum development, working alongside teachers/lecturers/practitioners, schools and local authorities in each RIC (e.g. Education Scotland officers potentially being assigned directly to learning communities or local authorities to work alongside Quality Curriculum Link Officers to facilitate change);
- review the current governance and management structure (which was seen as failing at present) and ensure greater diversity among those making decisions;

¹⁶ Although support for the continuation of RICs was not unanimous

- offer more curriculum and assessment advice and support to teachers/practitioners as well as practical support for professional learning communities;
- share resources, bringing schools together, sharing ideas and expertise;
- step back from Early Years and focus on primary and secondary schools;
- focus more on Senior Phase support/resources, which may have been overlooked in recent years; and
- change the way that Education Scotland is staffed, with more teachers/practitioners taking on key roles and a process whereby staff enter/leave the agency on a rolling basis so as to share but also retain their expertise by not removing them from the field (i.e. a more 'teacher-led' agency).

Several respondents also suggested that a review or reform would enable consideration of more 'innovative' or creative ways of working, although most respondents did not specify what such innovations would be:

"I think that Education Scotland should make more use of innovative practising classroom teachers, and have a stronger role in promoting innovative practice." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Secondary School)

A number of teachers/lecturers/practitioners also felt that Education Scotland had provided little or no support to them in recent years and so, on this basis, supported any change which would provide more assistance:

"I never really felt Education Scotland had any real bearing on how I designed courses or what happened in the classrooms in my department. It always felt like a distant quango that that just seemed to justify its existence by churning out documents." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Further, the resources and websites provided by Education Scotland were seen as particularly ineffective and inaccessible, at present:

"Most documents from Education Scotland (and others) are populated with numerous hyperlinks and references to other documents. This creates a feeling of bewilderment by most practitioners looking for information and support." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Primary School)

A final key observation was that there should be clear links to how outcomes for young people will be improved by any new or reformed agency to justify change.

Risks

The main perceived risks associated with Education Scotland reforms included:

- rushing the reforms and not taking time to consider changes with sufficient care/attention;
- that staff may face challenges (including stretched capacity) adapting to changes in subject curriculum and forms of assessment which, in turn, may have a negative effect on both recruitment and retention in the sector (i.e. staff despondency in a period of uncertainty);
- continued over-reliance on websites (which were perceived as poor in content and design) and excessive paperwork to share key learning/ messages which can be inaccessible/off-putting;
- that the reform is seen as a panacea, and attention is not given to other areas of Scottish education which may also be in need of review/reform;
- disruption and possible negative impact on teacher/practitioner workload and wellbeing (with a small number of comments that staff wellbeing should be at forefront of reform); and
- that the reforms are not significant enough or do not go far enough, and that things will not change, with continued misalignment between national control and local flexibility (i.e. a 'rebrand' rather than a reform).

“To me the biggest risk is that reform does not produce material change, which would be a real failure.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Secondary School)

Some again warned against the possible risk of current 'good practice' being lost during the reform process.

Several respondents also urged that any reforms should be as smooth as possible in their implementation so as to minimise impacts on teacher/practitioner workloads and not cause disruption to pupils' learning. There was a clear perceived need to provide continuity of support (with smooth transitions between any old and new structure).

Mitigating measures

There were limited ideas put forward for how risks could be mitigated, but the main suggestions included:

- to be clear and concise about what changes will be made and have a clear, short timescale for action (i.e. a clear timeline for the implementation of the reform process and clear parameters being set of the reformed Education Scotland remit);
- ensuring early and active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in communications around change (including teachers/practitioners);
- ensuring that the reform also includes a further review into and redesign of all remaining aspects of Scottish education, rather than being undertaken in isolation;

- using local expertise/establishing working groups in local areas to help inform and implement change rather than having one national group/lead;
- increased funding to support change; and
- having a ‘guiding coalition’ made up of key stakeholders to monitor progress/the success of change.

There were several comments throughout about the need to change or alter mindsets and to achieve cultural shifts in thinking among those at Education Scotland, the Scottish Government and wider education communities to remove what was seen as a lack of confidence and trust in teachers/practitioners. Teachers/lecturers/practitioners should be more empowered, it was suggested, in taking forward any revised curriculum (with less micro-management and greater flexibility being afforded to teachers/practitioners at the local level). Education Scotland was currently seen as being too political, and as being too ‘top down’ rather than working with and for teachers/practitioners:

“...a reduction in the top-down, high stakes accountability culture too prevalent in Scottish education. This ought to go hand in hand with the enhancement of the middle-level support and a move to more peer and community accountability rather than overly relying on an external top-down inspectorate.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Secondary School)

Similarly, some teachers/lecturers/practitioners may lack trust in any reformed agency, based on poor past experiences of Education Scotland, it was suggested. This too would need to be tackled to ensure acceptance of reforms at ground level and one way of fostering credibility would be to involve more skilled and experienced teachers/practitioners in any reformed agency who were known to have recent, relevant teaching experience (as opposed to those who may be perceived as too distanced from the classroom):

“Too many employees of Education Scotland have been out of the classroom environment for far too long to have any idea of the current reality.” (Individual, National Agency Officer)

Other suggestions included having an independent body set up to keep the new agency, leaders and politicians/the Scottish Government accountable.

Q16 Replacing SQA

A total of 267 respondents provided a substantive response to this question in the main consultation document, although many of these again referenced their earlier responses. In addition, a large number of those who provided a detailed response at Q14 above (or indeed at Section 2 more broadly) provided comments which were linked mainly to replacing SQA - these views are also included below. Again, the discussion below represents comments from across the response methods.

General approach

A large number of respondents indicated that they felt there was no need for replacement of the SQA, with concerns that it had been made a 'scapegoat' for problems that occurred during the pandemic:

"I feel that the SQA is a bit of a political scapegoat. It offers much that is good in Scottish education. I think it is wrong that the SQA is made to shoulder the blame for criticisms of the system as a whole." (Individual, Parent/Carer, Secondary School)

Those who did not support the change stressed that there were many good things about SQA that should be kept and built on, with no sense in replacing or removing anything just for the sake of it (i.e. 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'). Such respondents typically felt that it would be preferable to reform/improve SQA rather than establishing a new agency:

"Completely scrapping and replacing the SQA with a whole new body seems destructive and costly, particularly when there are some elements which work extremely well, and the new body would be carrying out some of the same work." (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/ Practitioner, Secondary School)

One of the biggest concerns among this group was potential loss of good quality staff already working for SQA, as well as reputational damage:

"It will be difficult to retain staff and recruit new staff; current staff will become demoralised and de-motivated; loss of reputation in sectors where SQA has good reputation; customers are being lost; money and investment lost; delivering exam diets and maintenance, review and development of all awards impacted and at risk if staff are lost or industrial action taken; relations strained with current centres." (Individual, National Agency Officer)

A smaller number felt that the proposed replacement of SQA had also not been based on sufficiently robust foundations with no evidence of research being used to inform the change (including lack of research to show that the costs of replacing the SQA would be offset by improved performance/added value from any new agency):

"There is a concern that a decision to replace the SQA has been made in advance of this consultation. The uncertainty created by the potentially prematurely announced demise of the SQA is regrettable and potentially damaging." (Organisation, Third Sector)

A lack of specificity regarding the announcement of the intention to create a single body with combined responsibility for curriculum and assessment was also cited.

One of the main views expressed by those in support of replacement (or radical reform of the existing SQA) echoed those raised elsewhere in the consultation, i.e. that the current assessment model does not align with the vision for CfE and the

pedagogy that is in practice across Scottish schools. Supporters of change commented that a new approach to exams and assessment was needed to improve the quality of learning and teaching in Scotland, and this could only be achieved by radical reforms:

“...we feel SQA needs an actual fundamental reform, not tinkering. This is a real opportunity to change how things are done.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Regional Officer)

“...the establishment of a new Agency has the potential to enhance the quality of learning and teaching across the education sector. It will be important that the remit, purpose, governance and culture of the new agency to match the aspirations of the system it will be designed to serve.” (Organisation, Other)

Similarly, comments were made in support of greater visibility of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) in the system with views that reform would provide such an opportunity.

A second argument was that trust in the current SQA had been eroded during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was felt that there had been poor communication and support from SQA at this time, and that the exams situation and subsequent assessments and awards had been badly handled. This was felt by the school and further/higher education sector, with colleges indicating that they had been particularly ignored. Several suggested that work was needed to explore ways of addressing this before any new system was introduced:

“...the teaching profession in general have little faith left in how SQA currently operates given the chaos which ensued in 2020 and then again in 2021 as a result of the pandemic...Reform is needed in so far as trust and culture are concerned, but I think before replacing the SQA, we need a national debate about the future of awards/accreditation/assessment in Scotland and then once this has taken place and we have an agreed way forward for the future, we can then design the system we need... it is premature to talk to replacement.” (Individual, Local Authority/Regional Officer)

Indeed, impartiality and consistency were two recurring themes, i.e. that maintaining an independent body for assessment was essential to avoid localised biases from occurring, and to ensure consistency in standards and approach Scotland wide. This again was also essential in building and maintaining trust of stakeholders:

“There needs to an independent examining body to assure integrity and trust in the assessment and qualifications.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

“A single new agency should be responsible for the development, assessment, review and award of qualifications for the curriculum. Separating out responsibility leads to disconnected approaches to their

implementation and ineffective communication.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner)

This was not unanimous, however, with a smaller number arguing for localised solutions to assessment.

Support for replacing the SQA was also justified by comments that it had become ‘disconnected’ from what was happening in schools and had become ‘outdated’. Employing/involving teachers/practitioners who have recent experience of teaching was seen as key, both in designing any reforms and in any new agency that is created to ensure better relationships and interface with the profession:

“The people making decisions about exams and assessments should be seconded teachers who are up-to-date with what is happening in schools.”
(Group, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

A chance to reconsider the traditional end of year exams and replace these with models that included different forms of credit based on performance/demonstration of learning over time again featured strongly in responses. Ongoing or continuous assessment was a desirable option raised by many rather than traditional final exams. This approach (i.e. the removal of ‘high stakes’ exams) was also seen as potentially being better for the welfare of children and young people. These options, or a blended approach of exams and continual assessment were strongly supported by young people and parents/carers, as well as advocated by some teachers/lecturers/practitioners and other stakeholders:

“...the current exam structure that the SQA has adopted is not working for many students and is no longer fit for purpose...We recognise that the current model of examination diets often means students are expected to complete exams within a short period causing unnecessary stress and anxiety and often does not allow students to achieve their full potential...We would fully support the exploration of a continuous assessment model recognising the benefits to learners.” (Organisation, Student Representatives)

A move to a system based on teacher/practitioner judgements made against a clear, national standard was again stressed as being a fairer system for all:

“...such reform could facilitate a new model of assessment which is compatible with the aspirations of CfE, featuring less exposure to formal assessment and more formative assessment that supports learning, as well as an enhanced role for teacher professional judgement. In so doing, such a model would better and more equitably serve the needs of all of Scotland’s learners.” (Organisation, Trade Union/Professional Body)

A large number of respondents commented on the need to revise the approach to Senior Phase assessment in particular, with a move away from annual testing to testing only at the end of the Senior Phase.

Other comments included that the new system must be impartial and politically autonomous:

“The new qualifications agency should be independent of government and therefore empowered to be responsive to the needs of the system not to shifting political trends.” (Organisation, Post school sector/University/College)

An issue which emerged more strongly in the meetings than the written consultation responses was a sense that SQA were ‘marking their own homework’ (a term also used in relation to Education Scotland and the inspection function) in terms of being responsible for both accreditation of, and regulation/awarding of qualifications. It was felt this meant SQA could not be truly impartial from either perspective and perhaps undermined the independence of the qualifications.

As with the proposed Education Scotland reforms, it was stressed, that review of the SQA must be informed via consultation and input from all relevant stakeholders, including teachers/practitioners, those in further/higher education, business, the third sector and children/young people at different stages of interaction with the (pre and post) qualifications system. A number of respondents argued for a ‘bottom-up’ approach to reforms to be adopted:

“The new agency should be ‘constructed’ from the bottom up in order to be clear on how it can add value across the system. This would require clarity about the outcomes it was expected to achieve in order to inform the most relevant structure.” (Organisation, Trade Union/Professional Body)

“An aspect of the national agency with the main responsibility for qualifications is the urgent need to review and develop its cooperation and collaboration with learning communities. In particular, there should be greater emphasis given to teachers' assessments of learners' potential, attainments and achievements prior to them moving to tertiary education or the world of work.” (Individual, Other Role, Secondary School)

Finally, respondents stressed the need for an assessment and qualification agency which would support the learning journey of all young people, both in and beyond the formal school system. It was stressed that both academic and vocational routes needed to be promoted and treated with parity of esteem, and that ELC, further and higher education, youth services and community learning all needed to be fully integrated from the outset and not be treated as a ‘bolt-on’.

Overall, respondents agreed that assessment must be aligned to curriculum development but felt that there was scope to reduce the current bureaucracy and still achieve this. The main difference of opinion was around whether SQA could remain and fulfil the assessment and qualification function (with significant reform) or needed to be entirely replaced:

“There is a consensus that the exam system needs to be reformed to align with Curriculum for Excellence, with a greater emphasis on vocational and

wider achievement more generally, but there is less agreement with what this will actually look like and whether or not there is a need to replace the SQA to achieve this aspiration.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Opportunities

The main perceived positive opportunities presented by possible replacement or reform of SQA were focused on changing the assessment structure and priorities for learning. This included moving towards blended assessment models incorporating teacher/practitioner assessment, continual assessment and exams; introducing greater skills-based assessment; developing a modern and progressive assessment system with broader and more diverse qualification pathways; and importantly, providing parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications. It was felt that this would better support ‘teaching for learning’ rather than ‘teaching for assessment’ which the current model engendered.

Other opportunities discussed by respondents included:

- to streamline or create fewer high quality flexible qualifications with a reduced assessment burden and less focus on end of learning assessment;
- for subsequent legislation to strengthen the need for qualification regulation in Scotland and to embed further coherence between different awarding and regulatory bodies within the education sector (including those covering the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors);
- explore different ways of giving credit in the tertiary education sector, to better reflect the skills and knowledge required in the world of work;
- to ensure that all qualifications, including those contained within apprenticeships, are accredited, regulated and included on the SCQF;
- a chance to reform courses which might be dated and to review some aspects of specific courses (several teachers/lecturers/practitioners cited flaws with the ways that their own specialist subjects/courses were currently assessed);
- a chance to improve the standard setting role of SQA, by redefining the role of verification and moderation, and perhaps shifting this to the inspectorate;
- to remove ‘norm referencing’ which was seen as detrimental/ineffective (with possible replacement by criterion referenced assessment); and
- a chance to build an integrated set of qualifications that are part of the full 3-18 curriculum and assessment system rather than being ‘bolted on’ to the last few years of schooling.

Many respondents (from all sectors) commented on opportunities to improve transparency and clarity around any new qualifications and accreditation body which should include:

- being easier to engage with in the future and more receptive to suggestions for change (including suggested changes to course content);
- offering greater transparency about how subject awards are put together, including establishing a review process of course content regularly with teachers/practitioners;
- making sure that all documents released by the body are clear and concise;
- transparency around any future payments to the SQA successor organisation(s) that are payable by local authorities;
- ensuring better quality control of exams and quality assurance process; and
- a chance to create a more public-facing assessment agency and system that is better communicated to and understood by parents/carers, etc.

Risks

Traditional, practicality-based risks associated with any transitioning of functions from one organisation to another was presented as the most fundamental risk. This included resourcing, managing change, IT issues, etc:

“Any transition needs to be robustly planned, managed and appropriately resourced (with people, finance, systems) to ensure the continuity of effective delivery whilst the transition and embedding of functions within the new body takes place.” (Organisation, Awarding Body)

Any transition must be managed so as to minimise workload impact on staff (both strategic and operational) and avoid any negative impacts on learners it was stressed.

The other main risks that were cited included:

- that old models are simply reinvented or rehashed in any replacement of SQA, and/or that reform is not genuine or robust (i.e. simple rebranding);
- that having separate bodies for accreditation and awarding qualifications may lead to confusion;
- losing valuable specialist expertise and experience of staff in any replacement/reforms, with potentially negative impacts on attracting any future employees, low staff morale, losing highly skilled staff in any reforms;
- concerns about maintaining national standards/risks to credibility and trust if a more complex regulatory landscape is introduced where new awarding bodies do not seek accreditation, or where existing awarding bodies surrender their accreditation;
- lack of confidence in the system during the transition period and/or in any new model unless sufficiently well explained;
- potential impacts on the credibility of SQA qualifications *per se* and therefore Scotland’s qualifications system - this was seen as a particular issue for

further and higher education where the SQA awards were considered to work well, and were recognised by employers and internationally;

- that the teacher/practitioner workforce may feel disconnected with any changes to the system as a result of 'change fatigue'; and
- that a 'Curriculum and Assessment Agency' may also become too focused on the Senior Phase and college provision at the expense of overlooking curriculum and pedagogy.

Overall, respondents (both who welcomed replacing SQA or keeping but significantly reforming it) highlighted the need to re-establish trust in any qualification's agency. Some suggested that, historically, there had been reciprocal mistrust between SQA and schools and that this had been damaging for all.

Others commented more generally that, while risks were inevitable in replacing SQA, they perceived that the risks of not reforming posed more of a threat.

Mitigating measures

The main mitigating measures that were suggested included:

- genuine commitment to make a fundamental change/overt Scottish Government commitment to, and promotion of, any new system;
- clear, transparent and timely communication and genuine engagement with all stakeholders (listening to what learners, schools, parents/carers, employers and further and higher education establishments really want);
- to retain as many existing SQA staff in any new agency as possible to ease transitions/ensure continuity of skills and experience;
- ensuring that the assessment and qualifications organisation is run for and by qualified educators;
- to provide clarification on the roles and impact of all stakeholders working in the system;
- to have an interim assessment body in place to manage assessment during transition from one agency to another; and
- piloting of any new system in discrete areas before wider roll-out.

Established plans for ongoing (possibly annual) review and reflection to inform evolution of the new system/agency over time was also suggested. This may include disseminating information about what is working well as well as progress being monitored by independent observers:

“...there must be plenty of opportunities for discussion factored in from the beginning of the process, with regular review of successes and a professional bravery to change if it's not working.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Q17 Considering the establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency

Of those who responded to the main consultation document, 176 substantive responses were given to this question. Again, however, relevant feedback which was provided in response to earlier questions at Section 4, as well as that provided via non-standard and meeting responses were also analysed and reported below.

Several respondents indicated that they found this question unclear and were unsure how this question differed from preceding questions (specifically, respondents were unclear which 'Agency' was being referred to and how this differed from Education Scotland and SQA which they had discussed in earlier questions). Many others simply referenced their earlier answers or indicated that no further comments, and others said they had no view or felt they did not know enough to comment.

General approach

Again, the main comments from those who provided valid responses to this question were consistent with the key findings at Q4. This included the need for clarity in relation to the purpose/rationale of such a new agency if reforms to Education Scotland were effective (i.e. what additionality would it bring?); how the 'new' agency would fit into the revised structure of national agencies; and the need for a clear set of aims, a defined focus and a shared understanding of the role and remit of any new agency.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities was stressed throughout, including that the reforms must define the role of **all** those operating in the sector and seek to avoid duplication (not limited to just a new agency). Views were also expressed that it was important that the role of local authorities as the education authority are protected and that their responsibilities in supporting curriculum development are recognised in any reforms:

“The relationship between this agency and the RICs must be explored carefully to avoid duplication of bureaucratic approaches to school improvement and a continuation of the existing trend of a vast array of policy documents overwhelming leaders and teachers.” (Organisation, Post school sector/University/College)

Other unsupportive comments which were consistent with Q4 included concerns that such a change could undo/negatively impact on things that were currently perceived to be working well, such as SVQs and work-based qualifications where it felt that significant reform to these qualifications/assessment processes was not needed. There were also concerns that there may be superficial structural change (at considerable cost) but no corresponding cultural change, and that many of the existing weaknesses of the current system would not be tackled. Cultural change and fostering a culture of collaboration was seen as something that should be a clear priority for any new agency.

Specific comments were again made (by teachers/lecturers/practitioners and local authority respondents) that the proposed reforms may be premature, lack sufficient input from teachers/practitioners and not be aligned with research evidence - this would all undermine trust in any new agency from the beginning, it was felt:

“Our stakeholders are disappointed that the suggestion of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency has been made without full consideration or collaboration with them. It is disappointing that the opportunity to discuss the OECD recommendations with those in the system was not further explored, therefore there is a tension that reform will continue to be a top-down model.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Those resistant to change also offered alternative models, which included separation of functions between agencies, i.e. a separate improvement agency/professional learning provider, a curriculum and assessment agency and a separate inspection body.

Again, among those who did not support the creation of a new combined agency, scepticism was evident with regards to the change being motivated by politics rather than a genuine desire to improve systems and outcomes. Any replacement organisation must be independent from government, it was stressed.

Similarly, many of the comments in favour of a new Agency echoed those outlined at Q4. This included a sense that it would provide greater consistency in and throughout the system:

“A single agency would remove any impartiality issues but also ensure that those other awarding bodies and stakeholders, who in the current system have a need for accreditation and regulation services, remain in a position to provide flexibility and add value and diversity to the Scottish Education and Skills system. It would also provide confidence that any programmes on offer in Scotland remain of high quality.” (Organisation, Industry/Private Sector)

Others also supported the new combined agency on the basis that a radical overhaul of existing systems and organisations was needed (and as such stressed that reforms must be robust, thorough, radical and non-tokenistic):

“this needs to be the whole-hearted move to design a future-proof 21st [Century] agile and empowering curriculum, using effective researched-based pedagogy and innovative assessment... This is the opportunity to create an innovative, flexible assessment system which enables learners to show their learning in the most appropriate way rather than in a final high stakes written exam. Holistic assessment approaches could also support transitions to sustained, positive destinations and move us away from siloed curricular learning blocks.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Other comments included that, if a single agency was created:

- integrity and validity of qualifications were crucial and should be maintained;
- it should be focused on learners and support all learner journeys;
- its design must be ‘bottom-up’ and be inclusive of front-line teachers/lecturers/practitioners and provide them with a sense of ownership of its objectives and services;
- the organisation should be teacher/practitioner-focussed and work with teacher/practitioner-led organisations who have a wealth of knowledge of assessment and curriculum development in every local authority in Scotland;
- the agency should work alongside schools and local authority partners to develop the support needed to implement change and to serve the best interests of the learners;
- the new agency should have strong links with universities and business;
- the reform should identify the tried, tested and trusted parts of SQA which work well and develop a new agency based around these elements; and
- careful thought should be given to its name (to avoid it appearing a simple rebranding exercise but also to reflect the roles and functions it provides).

For tertiary education, it was again felt that any new curriculum and assessment agency must be broadly based - having responsibility for vocational as well as academic qualifications and meeting the needs of colleges and training providers as well as schools. It was also highlighted that, should any current SQA functions lie outside of the remit of the new agency, it needs to be clearly communicated where these functions will sit:

“Any such agency must encompass an approach to life-long learning and include progression pathways through academic and vocational subjects that enable learners to transition into and between roles during their careers.” (Organisation, Trade Unions & Professional Bodies)

A few also stressed that the new agency should consider and support the needs of the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, and that it should be attuned closely to the aims and objectives of the National Plan for Gaelic and in individual Gaelic Language Plans.

Opportunities

The main perceived opportunities presented by the establishment of a new curriculum and assessment agency included:

- a chance to rebuild public and other stakeholder trust and confidence in the education and qualifications systems;
- a chance to bring the curriculum and assessment system more up-to-date and reflect the needs of learners in 21st Century Scotland;

- a chance to focus more on curriculum and pedagogy rather than assessment and attainment;
- a chance to offer clearer guidance to schools on what knowledge and skills must be assessed to attain specific levels/a more detailed focus on developing a core learning syllabus;
- a chance to better involve skilled and experienced teachers/practitioners in the agency who understand the demands of teaching and assessment on the ground;
- a chance to introduce greater transparency with regard to quality improvement;
- a chance to explore alternative assessment models, including competency-based models for assessing academic subjects; and
- a chance for system review which addresses social inequality, the attainment gap and poverty.

In line with responses to earlier questions, several respondents also commented on opportunities presented by the reforms to declutter and streamline the curriculum:

“The new curriculum and assessment agency should primarily ensure that education objectives are simplified and aligned. Currently there are too many layers with competing agendas. This over complication has resulted in a confusion of purpose in Scottish education.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

Risks

The main risks were again very similar to those cited in response to Q14, Q15 and Q16 above, including:

- that there continues to be a cluttered landscape in terms of agencies and overlap/duplication in roles and responsibilities;
- that there is no real or meaningful change in ethos, simply a new agency delivering the old model;
- that any transition to a new organisation needs to be well planned, clear and considered with a sensible and co-ordinated change management process in place;
- stakeholder familiarity and buy-in to any new system may be weak in the early days of change, and would need to be mitigated;
- that learners are not sufficiently well included in any consultation/learners' experiences and voices are not heard;
- risk of losing skilled teachers/practitioners from the profession by not involving them meaningfully in change; and
- that the proposed reforms would be expensive.

Comments were again made regarding accountability, with respondents stressing that risk assessments must be included in any planning and implementation for a new agency, with accountability assigned for ongoing monitoring:

“[If Education Scotland and SQA are combined] I think there would be an even stronger need for an independent inspectorate - able to scrutinise the national agency as well as the authorities and centres responsible for delivery.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Mitigating measures

Again, the most commonly cited mitigating measures were similar to those offered in response to Q14, Q15 and Q16 above, including:

- the need to keep the teaching profession and general public well informed about future reforms and their implementation (i.e. clear, transparent and accessible information and communication);
- the need for ongoing and meaningful consultation activity during any planning and implementation of change (including engagement with parents/carers, learners, educators, colleges and universities and employers); and
- having a strong and effective leadership team in place within any new agency.

Several respondents also reiterated the importance of ensuring that the experience and working knowledge across existing agencies is harnessed and built upon to avoid the mistakes of the past:

“...there is a wealth of experience in Education Scotland, the SQA and HMIe which has to be captured and nurtured or any new system or agency will struggle to gain any momentum.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

Q14-Q17 Timescales for reforms

Across all four proposed changes, several responses were given that the timescales should simply reflect whatever was feasible to implement the replacement system effectively. Others indicated that it was difficult to judge timescales when the extent of the changes to be made were not yet known. Similarly, some indicated that timescales for change would be contingent on the budget available to support this.

A common recurring view was that any reforms should not be ‘rushed through’ for ‘political expediency’, but that time should be taken to ‘get things right’ and to ensure a smooth transition (including piloting of changes, where appropriate):

“Reforms are needed now but if things move too quickly then the situation could be worsened rather than improved.” (Individual, Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner, Secondary School)

It was also stressed across all four reform areas, that time needed to be taken to undertake genuine, detailed and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders (including children and young people themselves) in order to inform the changes. Several also suggested time was needed to learn from other countries, to allow effective communication around change, and to train and support teachers/practitioners:

“Reforms must take place with urgency however also at a pace that allows appropriate engagement and reflection.” (Group, Post school sector/University/College)

Several respondents felt that timescales should be cognisant of recent upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and seek to avoid overwhelming teachers/practitioners:

“...the timing of any change needs to be considered very carefully in recognition of the ongoing pressures faced by schools as a result of the pandemic.” (Organisation, Local Authority/Local Government)

It was also suggested by several respondents that a ‘phased approach’ to the reforms should be considered as too much disruption at one time could be destabilising. It was also stressed that any timescales for change should seek to minimise disruption to learners, with several urging a need for some overlap between any old and new system. With specific reference to replacing the SQA and/or implementing a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency, it was suggested that taking too long may have implications for stakeholder confidence, with some Senior Phase learners continuing to learn and be assessed and certificated in a model that was widely viewed as being ‘not fit for purpose’.

While several respondents were keen to see the reform process begin as soon as was practicable, there was also consensus that embedded change would take time to achieve. A reasonable number felt that change should/could be achieved within two years, although most of those who specified a timescale suggested 3-5 years was a realistic target for each of the proposed changes. In relation to replacing the SQA however, a minimum of 5 years was considered necessary for further/higher education establishments due to the nature of the courses delivered.

Key Findings

Additional issues

A number of important additional points were raised throughout the consultation which did not relate specifically to the set consultation questions, and/or were provided by minority voices. These are outlined below.

Specific language and topic based issues were raised as important areas for consideration, both generally and in relation to each consultation feedback area. This included integration of GME and developing a two-language system, as well as the need for greater consideration of gender and race equality, and environmental issues. In relation to the topic areas, it was stressed that these needed to be considered in the system design and were areas that needed to be better integrated and explored throughout the curriculum.

Securing input from, engagement with, and considering the impacts upon various pupil and parent groups was also seen as important to ensure the curriculum and any new system/agency is inclusive and reflects their needs. This included children and young people with care experience, survivors of domestic abuse, minority ethnic groups (including those where English is not their first language), and neurodiverse learners. In particular, one thread that ran throughout the consultation questions, was that ASN learners needed to be better supported. This included the need for smaller class sizes and/or increased support staff, staff with training and experience to provide the support (and support for existing staff to gain training), better/tailored resources and technology use and a move away from high-pressure end of year exams or the promotion of a wider range of learner pathways.

Finally, several respondents commented on the consultation process itself. It was felt that this had not been promoted well enough to parents/carers, and that the process had not been accessible for parents/carers as the consultation materials were not suitably tailored for this group - it was felt that the consultation document contained a lot of jargon and required a level of background knowledge and experience not generally held by parents/carers. This view was particularly acute for minority ethnic parents/carers and those where English was not their first language. Similar views were held in relation to other stakeholder groups, such as children and young people and ASN learners (however, it should be noted that a separate questionnaire format was utilised with young people, although the results are not reported here).

Other concerns around the consultation process included that the decision had already been taken to replace the SQA (as a result of the OECD report) before the consultation took place and that the timescales for consultation and recommendations were too short to be meaningful. Several respondents raised concern about perceived gaps in the membership profile of the Expert Panel who was supporting the Advisor. It was also felt that the consultation document covered areas out with the scope of the review and so could create unrealistic expectations in stakeholders regarding what the review could/would tackle.

Key findings

Generally, respondents supported the CfE and its four capacities, but felt there was a disconnect in this between the BGE and Senior Phase learning. It was felt that assessment became the focus in the Senior Phase to the detriment of all other aspects of pedagogy and learning. Similarly, many respondents agreed that a focus on end of year exams was not always a fair method of assessment for many young people and advocated for reform in this area. It was suggested that continual assessment, or a blended approach would provide a fairer reflection of a young person's capabilities. It was also suggested that more needed to be done to recognise wider achievements, and not focus everything on academic assessments. It was felt that more vocational routes through education were needed to engage all pupils and not just those who want to go to university, and that parity of esteem was needed between academic and vocational learning. It was also suggested that greater links were required with colleges in order to offer a wider curriculum and different learner journeys, and that links with business were important in order to ensure young people develop the skills needed for the future, and to ensure that employers recognise and valued the different qualifications and achievements obtained.

Overall, respondents were generally supportive of the various system reform proposals discussed in the consultation, i.e. the removal of the inspection function from Education Scotland, further reform of Education Scotland, the replacement of the SQA (although many favoured reform of this agency instead), and the establishment of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency. It was agreed that any new bodies needed to be independent from both government and other national or policy setting agencies (this was particularly the case for any Inspection body as it needed to be free to assess policy as well). Another common theme was that new or reformed agencies should be informed by and/or staffed by those with recent teaching experience, with secondment models suggested as a possibility.

Throughout the consultation responses, respondents stressed the need to develop a 'bottom-up' system that truly empowers schools and teachers/practitioners to make decisions - it was felt that the rhetoric and the reality needed to align in this respect (which it was not seen to do currently). There was also a need for greater focus on pedagogy and learning throughout the system, and importantly, that learners needed to be the primary focus at the heart of the system, with a strong input from them in the development of any new or reformed system/agency.

In addition, it was seen to be important to involve and include all educational sectors within any reforms. It was noted by ELC and non-school settings that they felt too often they were treated as 'add-ons' rather than being considered as integrated and included within the sector. Similarly, the impact of any reforms, particularly to the SQA, on the college sector need to be fully considered before changes are made: namely, that it is important to recognise SQA's role in the regulation of professional, technical and vocational qualifications, and not just its involvement in the school sector.

However, it was felt that a wider debate was required around what Scotland's education system should look like, and that this needed to inform any reforms going forward. Respondents generally felt that more radical and widespread changes were required than were the subject of the current consultation. Indeed, they suggested the education landscape was too cluttered, with overlap and duplication of effort, and that system wide clarity was needed around the roles and responsibilities of **all** stakeholders, as well as clear information on how they work together. It was felt that teachers/practitioners were bombarded with information, policies, new initiatives, etc. and that there was no way to ascertain the quality offerings. Workloads were now so overwhelming that there was not time for them to consider the various offerings/opportunities or for them to take on any more responsibilities. It was felt that wider reforms were needed to tackle the root causes of the issues, and some were concerned that the proposed structural changes may simply turn out to be a 'rebranding' exercise rather than delivering real and meaningful change.

It is clear from the consultation responses that respondents view the reforms as an ongoing process as opposed to a one-off consultation exercise. All stakeholders advocated for ongoing consultation around the development and implementation of these reforms, and felt there were key roles for all stakeholder groups across all sectors to develop the future of education in Scotland, and in particular, learners and teachers/practitioners should be at the forefront of these.

Conclusions and next steps

Overall, a good response rate to the consultation was achieved, and while potential gaps in promotion or accessibility to particular groups were identified by some respondents, it should be noted that large numbers of stakeholders provided feedback across a range of formats.

While a wide range of feedback was provided, and different stakeholders were interested in different elements of the consultation, there appears to have been good engagement across all sections and questions, although response rates did drop-off towards final few questions. While there were differences of opinions, there was a clear desire for reforms across the education sector in Scotland, particularly around the approach to inspections and assessments, and to provide greater alignment of the CfE between the BGE and Senior Phase. The proposed reforms were seen to offer opportunities to address particular issues within the system and to develop a more teacher/practitioner and learner focused approach, provided that real and meaningful engagement was continued, and that the reforms offered culture change and not simply a change in organisational structure.

Going forward, the results of this report will feed into and help to inform the Advisor's recommendations on the proposed reforms. Such recommendations will be considered before the next steps in the reform process are developed.

Appendix A: Respondent Profile

Table 2: Organisation and Group Sector

	Number	Percent
Third Sector Organisations	43	19%
Trade Unions and Professional Bodies	34	15%
Local Authority/Local Government	29	13%
Secondary Schools	27	12%
Primary Schools	19	8%
Post School Sector/University/College	18	8%
National Agencies/Public Bodies	14	6%
Awarding Bodies	11	5%
Parent Body/Group	11	5%
Industry/Private Sector	8	4%
Early Years	3	1%
Other	8	4%
Total	225	100%

Table 3: Role/Interest in the Education System (Groups and Individuals Only)

	Number	Percent
Teacher/Lecturer/Practitioner	390	65%
Parent/Carer	54	9%
School/Centre Leader	50	8%
National Agency Officer	22	4%
Local Authority/Regional Officer	7	1%
Support Staff	5	<1%
Employer/Industry	4	<1%
Child/Young Person	3	<1%
Other	57	10%
Not Specified	8	1%
Total	600*	100%

* Note: Organisations were not asked this question.

Table 4: Links to Educational Stage (All Respondents)

	Number	Percent
Early Years	22	3%
Primary	159	21%
Secondary	354	46%
Tertiary (Further/Higher Education)	57	7%
Missing/Not Answered/Not Relevant	186	24%
Total	764*	100%

* Note: Some respondents covered multiple stages and so are included above as multiple responses.

Appendix B: Responses to Closed Questions

Table 5: Q1.1 The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	81	12%	12%
Agree	315	46%	48%
Neither Agree/Disagree	100	14%	15%
Disagree	113	16%	17%
Strongly Disagree	54	8%	8%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	663		
Missing	27	4%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 6: Q2.1 Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	16	2%	2%
Agree	131	19%	20%
Neither Agree/Disagree	124	18%	19%
Disagree	269	39%	41%
Strongly Disagree	120	17%	18%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	660		
Missing	30	4%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 7: Q3.1 In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	25	4%	4%
Agree	185	27%	28%
Neither Agree/Disagree	146	21%	22%
Disagree	200	29%	31%
Strongly Disagree	97	14%	15%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	653		
Missing	37	5%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 8: Q4.1 The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	65	9%	10%
Agree	204	30%	32%
Neither Agree/Disagree	284	41%	44%
Disagree	54	8%	8%
Strongly Disagree	33	5%	5%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	640		
Missing	50	7%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 9: Q5.1 The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	120	17%	19%
Agree	236	34%	38%
Neither Agree/Disagree	151	22%	24%
Disagree	87	13%	14%
Strongly Disagree	29	4%	5%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	623		
Missing	67	10%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 10: Q6.1 Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	27	4%	4%
Agree	95	14%	15%
Neither Agree/Disagree	157	23%	25%
Disagree	231	33%	36%
Strongly Disagree	123	18%	19%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	633		
Missing	57	8%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 11: Q8.1 There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	4	1%	1%
Agree	72	10%	12%
Neither Agree/Disagree	171	25%	28%
Disagree	238	34%	39%
Strongly Disagree	128	19%	21%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	613		
Missing	77	11%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 12: Q9.1 There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	9	1%	1%
Agree	52	8%	9%
Neither Agree/Disagree	173	25%	29%
Disagree	261	38%	43%
Strongly Disagree	110	16%	18%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	605		
Missing	85	12%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 13: Q10.1 There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	29	4%	5%
Agree	148	21%	25%
Neither Agree/Disagree	195	28%	33%
Disagree	139	20%	24%
Strongly Disagree	76	11%	13%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	587		
Missing	103	15%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 14: Q11.1 There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	11	2%	2%
Agree	92	13%	15%
Neither Agree/Disagree	155	22%	26%
Disagree	228	33%	38%
Strongly Disagree	121	18%	20%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	607		
Missing	83	12%	
Total	690	100%	100%

Table 15: Q12.1 Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity

	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	155	22%	25%
Agree	265	38%	43%
Neither Agree/Disagree	83	12%	14%
Disagree	60	9%	10%
Strongly Disagree	51	7%	8%
Sub-Total (Answered Qu)	614		
Missing	76	11%	
Total	690	100%	100%