

Consultation Questions
Section 1

While I agree with the reasons given in the document, I think there is another crucial reason why multilingualism should be actively encouraged: it provides cognitive benefits that go beyond the language domain and last throughout the lifespan. For example, research

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<p>1. Do you agree with the reasons given for promoting and learning languages on pages 4 and 5, and that these are the main reasons for supporting current language initiatives in Scotland? If not, why not?</p>	<p>has shown that bilinguals are better able at coordinating information and paying attention to what is relevant, excluding what is irrelevant, in a wide range of tasks. This advantage may be due to the bilinguals' experience of inhibiting a language when they are speaking the other. Furthermore, there is some evidence that bilinguals may be somewhat protected from cognitive decline in old age. The document focuses almost entirely on enhancing positive attitudes towards multilingualism, and especially on maintaining Gaelic and Scots, but there is little about promoting bilingualism. While there is no doubt that multilingualism can increase economic opportunity and enrich education, it would be good if language policy in Scotland were also informed by current research on bilingual cognition. At best, there is a lack of information about the basic facts of bilingualism among the sectors that most deal with bilingual children in their everyday life (families, teachers, health practitioners, etc.). At worst, there still are misconceptions about the potential 'dangers' of bilingualism, which can lead to loss of opportunities for children and even to damage to children's development.</p>
<p>2. Do you agree that the language initiatives described on pages 6 – 12 and elsewhere are the key areas for language promotion in Scotland? If not, why not?</p>	<p>There could be more explicit recognition of the fact that early childhood is the best window of opportunity to become bilingual, and that children need to be exposed to enough input in a given language in order to acquire it. This fact calls for introducing languages at a much earlier age than upper primary and providing more frequent exposure. The current language provision in Scotland's schools is still too piecemeal and insufficient in terms of length of exposure and input quality. There should be more teacher training explicitly focused on language learning and multilingualism in children.</p>
<p>3. Do you agree that the key principles listed on pages 14 and 15 should shape language activity in Scotland? If not, why not?</p>	<p>Yes, but these principles should also include awareness of the linguistic and cognitive advantages that bilingualism can bring about, and access to information about bilingualism by families and schools.</p>
<p>4. Are there any other comments you would like to offer on this strategy in relation to the promotion of languages in Scotland?</p>	<p>A more robust link between researchers and policy makers would be beneficial to the future development of a language strategy for Scotland. Some researchers (like myself) are already individually involved in disseminating</p>

	the results of their research outside academia.
5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how do you think you may be able to contribute to the success of the strategy?	