

a consultation on the next generation of national qualifications in scotland



RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS



EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS



a consultation on the
next generation of
national qualifications
in scotland

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cabinet secretary's foreword



Curriculum for Excellence is about promoting a fresh approach across the whole of Scottish education to enable our children and young people to become successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals. The programme has attracted international interest. A recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development praised the “breadth of vision and commitment to both high standards and social inclusiveness” contained in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

We must ensure that our qualifications system helps to deliver the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. This consultation document should be read in conjunction with *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching*. There are also important links to be made with *Skills for Scotland* – our lifelong skills strategy which shows how all of the constituent parts of our education and learning systems can contribute to giving Scotland a skills base that is world class.

In summary, we need to develop the next generation of National Qualifications to meet the needs of Scotland in the 21st Century. By doing so, we can achieve our ambitions to create a more successful Scotland.

This consultation document will be accompanied by a series of events and seminars to give the education and wider community a chance to discuss the issues involved. I hope that you will take the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

This is your chance to help ensure that our qualifications system develops the skills and raises the ambitions of Scotland's young people. I would encourage you to respond and let us have your reactions and views.

Fiona Hyslop MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

setting the context

The Scottish Government has high ambitions for Scotland; ambitions which demonstrate our confidence in the potential talents of Scotland's people. Our principal purpose is to create a more successful Scotland with opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. To deliver this purpose five overarching strategic objectives have been identified – to make Scotland smarter, safer and stronger, wealthier and fairer, greener and healthier. We believe that these objectives should be the focus of government and public services both nationally and locally.

We believe that *Curriculum for Excellence* can play a significant role in achieving our principal purpose and strategic objectives.

The aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* is to help prepare all young people in Scotland to take their place in a modern society and economy. The curriculum will provide a framework for all young people in Scotland to gain the knowledge and skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that they need.

Curriculum for Excellence will offer better educational outcomes for all young people and will provide more choices and more chances for those young people who need them, helping us to meet the concerns raised in the recent OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report on *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*¹.

This means:

- a coherent and inclusive curriculum from 3 to 18 wherever learning is taking place, whether in schools, colleges or other settings;
- a focus on outcomes;
- a broad general education;
- time to take qualifications in ways best suited to the young person;
- more opportunities to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for all young people at every stage;
- a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing at every stage;
- appropriate pace and challenge for every child; and
- ensuring connections between all aspects of learning and support for learning.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report on *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland* (OECD 2007).



We already have a great deal of excellent practice in Scotland. We need to build upon this to create more exciting, engaging, relevant learning and teaching in every pre-school centre, school and college, or wherever the child or young person is learning. Local authorities and schools will need to build strong partnerships with a range of organisations including colleges, universities, employers, Skills Development Scotland, community learning and development bodies and the voluntary sector and other providers to deliver a personalised learning experience for every child and young person.

General Education

Every child and young person is entitled to expect their education to provide them with:

- a curriculum which is **coherent** from 3 to 18;
- opportunities to develop **skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work** (including career planning skills) with a continuous focus on **literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing**;
- a **broad general education**, including well planned experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas from early years through to S3;
- a **senior phase** of education after S3 which provides the opportunity to obtain qualifications as well as to continue to develop the four capacities;
- personal support to enable them to gain as much as possible from the opportunities which *Curriculum for Excellence* can provide; and
- support in moving into **positive and sustained destinations** beyond school.

It is the responsibility of schools and their partners to bring the experiences and outcomes together and apply these entitlements to produce programmes for learning across a broad curriculum, covering science, language, mathematics, social studies (including Scottish history), expressive arts, health and wellbeing, religious and moral education and technology. Throughout this broad curriculum it is expected there will be an emphasis on Scottish contexts, Scottish cultures and Scotland's history and place in the world. This planning should demonstrate the **principles for curriculum design**: challenge and enjoyment; breadth; progression; depth; personalisation and choice; coherence and relevance.

Learning should be made available in a range of ways including interdisciplinary learning and a range of opportunities which ensure a broad approach, enabling, for example, a coherent understanding of environmental issues.

The curriculum framework sets out what a child or young person should be able to do and the experiences that contribute to their learning, rather than detailed definitions of content or prescribed hours of study.

The experiences and outcomes are grouped into five levels - early (in which most children will undertake learning to the end of P1); first (in which most children will undertake learning by the end of P4); second (in which most children will undertake learning by the end of P7); third (in which most young people will undertake learning during S1 – S3) and fourth (in which most young people will have undertaken learning by the end of S3). For all young people, learning, at whatever level, will be managed in a manner that paves the way for work towards qualifications in the senior phase at the SCQF level appropriate to the needs and achievements of each young person.

The intention must be to avoid driving young people through the levels as fast as possible. This arrangement of experiences and outcomes is intended to give teachers² and other staff the flexibility and scope to follow issues through and to provide personalised and varying programmes of learning so that the young person is secure at a level before moving on.

The experiences and outcomes can be packaged in different ways appropriate to the individual child or young person. *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* gives further details about the role of curriculum areas and subjects in the new curriculum. For example, in early secondary some young people might learn about elements of the modern language outcomes as part of learning about hospitality or business; or outcomes related to mathematics in the context of learning about geography; or outcomes related to geography in the context of learning about science. Planning should be done in a way that enables all young people to capitalise on the specialist expertise of subject teachers. In all cases from 3 to 18, the focus should be on good quality learning and teaching.

Assessment will be an integral part of learning and teaching, helping to provide an emerging picture of a young person's learning and achievements as he or she develops across the four capacities. Up to the end of S3, assessment by teachers will be the main means of assessing each young person's achievements. Assessment should be planned and used in ways which reflect the principles for curriculum design.

At the end of S3, a young person's progress within the outcomes should be recorded by their teachers. Teachers will be expected to assess the level and extent of achievement by reference to the young person's learning across curriculum areas, wherever the learning has taken place. This will be the opportunity to bring together the teachers' judgements and the young person's own record of their achievements and skills by drawing on a range of evidence. Young people will have been learning how to evaluate and present their skills through personal learning planning from early years.

² For reasons of brevity we have used the term teachers to cover all educators.



We are aware that some schools and local authorities have sought to increase pace, challenge and achievement by entering cohorts of pupils for National Qualifications³ before the end of S3. The Scottish Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the principles set out in the national guidance on early presentation⁴. Decisions about early presentation must be made in the best interests of an individual pupil – not classes, cohorts or year groups. The Scottish Government would not support early presentation other than in exceptional circumstances related to an individual young person. It is important that the full period to the end of S3 is used to provide a rich curriculum allowing young people to study and have experiences that provide both breadth and depth of learning. The expectation is that young people will reach a deeper and more secure level of attainment and achievement at the end of S3 than they do at present. If necessary, the Scottish Government will strengthen the existing guidance on when young people can be presented for National Qualifications and/or arrange for Age and Stage regulations to be introduced to reinforce this policy.

Senior Phase

As young people move into S4, they will continue to develop the four capacities to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. To do so, they must continue to have opportunities that reinforce their broader learning and achievements through a range of experiences including enhancing skills for life and skills for work, an active and healthy lifestyle and an appreciation of Scotland and its place in the world. There will be opportunities to maintain and enhance their literacy and numeracy skills. They will also start building their lifelong portfolio of qualifications.

The qualifications young people aim for should be flexible and designed to offer pathways to the next stage, whether in further or higher education, employment or training. They should be able to be taken at school, college or other settings and they should provide credit for young people's attainment.

Full details of the proposals for the next generation of National Qualifications are outlined in this document and are summarised briefly below.

- (i) **National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability.** Highers, in particular, will remain the 'gold standard' of the Scottish education system. The content of all National Qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.

³ National Qualifications cover Standard Grade, Access 1, 2 and 3, Intermediate 1 and 2, Higher and Advanced Higher.

⁴ Guidance on the appropriate age and stage when young people can be presented for externally assessed qualifications (Scottish Executive Education Department Circular 03/2005).

- (ii) **A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications.** The new qualification will be available in a wide range of subjects, as at present. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3. (See Annex A Table 1 for illustration of new qualifications on SCQF Framework.)
- (iii) **New awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.** *Curriculum for Excellence* brings a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in our young people. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government is proposing new separate awards to accredit young people's literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The awards will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The intention is also to ensure that the structure of these awards is flexible enough to make them available to adult learners.
- (iv) **Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people.** Suggestions include:
- studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;
 - introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
 - encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

One other feature of the senior phase will be the introduction of a Scottish Science Baccalaureate and a Scottish Language Baccalaureate. The Baccalaureates will comprise Higher and Advanced Higher courses together with an interdisciplinary project. The aims of these awards are to encourage more pupils to study science and language subjects in upper secondary school; raise the status of S6; and help schools to develop greater links with higher education, colleges and employers. These awards are not part of this consultation. The Scottish Government announced details of these awards in June.



section 1:

the case for change

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section 1: the case for change

1. This section outlines the strengths and challenges for Scottish education. We describe how *Curriculum for Excellence* is helping Scotland to meet those challenges and why we need to develop the next generation of National Qualifications to help deliver the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

2. *Curriculum for Excellence* is one of the most ambitious programmes of educational change ever undertaken in Scotland. For the first time, we are focusing on what the Scottish education system should be delivering for children and young people from ages 3 to 18. The aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* are that every child and young person should:

- know they are valued and will be supported to become a successful learner, an effective contributor, a confident individual and a responsible citizen;
- experience a traditionally broad Scottish curriculum that develops skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, with a sustained focus on literacy and numeracy, that encourages an active, healthy and environmentally sustainable lifestyle and builds an appreciation of Scotland and its place in the world;
- benefit from learning and teaching that strikes a better balance between equipping them with the skills for passing exams and skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work; and
- benefit from an assessment system that supports the curriculum rather than leads it and ensures that their transition into qualifications is smooth.

3. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) report *Improving Scottish Education*⁵ said that "inspection evidence shows that Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well. Most learners are well supported and well taught... In primary and secondary schools, young people generally make sound progress in their learning, behave well, have good relationships with their teachers and ultimately achieve an appropriate range of formal qualifications". However, HMIE identified areas for improvement. In particular "while many of our young people perform well in school and beyond, too many do not develop sufficiently the competences, capabilities and values which are vital for the future success and well-being both of themselves and Scotland as a whole".

4. The HMIE report suggested that *Curriculum for Excellence* "was both timely and necessary" in encouraging learning and teaching of the highest quality. The issues that HMIE recommended *Curriculum for Excellence* should address include:

- being clear about the elements that should form part of every young person's education, irrespective of perceived ability, social background or school attended;

⁵ Improving Scottish Education (HMIE 2006).



- being much more rigorous and explicit about the development and certification of essential skills, particularly literacy and numeracy. This requirement goes beyond pupils with specific difficulties to all pupils, including those entering higher education; and
- providing space for imaginative teaching that can capitalise on approaches which make learning relevant, lively and motivating.

5. More recently, the OECD report, *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland* identified many strengths in Scottish education. It suggested that Scotland performs at a consistently high standard in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Scotland also has one of the most equitable school systems among OECD countries. However, the report also identified some major challenges for Scottish education. There are still continuing issues of inequality. Children from poorer communities and low socio-economic status homes are more likely than others to under-achieve, while the gap associated with poverty and deprivation appears to be very wide. The OECD identified particular concerns over inequalities in staying-on rates, participation in different academic levels of national courses and pass rates in those courses.

6. Like the HMIE report, the OECD report stressed that too many of Scotland’s young people are leaving secondary education with minimal or no qualifications. The OECD report also suggested that the Scottish qualifications system contains complexities which have accumulated over time and that young people have an “uneven quality of learning experience in compulsory secondary education”. They recommended a bolder and broader approach to vocational studies in schools. In setting out the challenges for Scottish education, the OECD report also identified potential solutions. In particular, the OECD praised the “breadth of vision and commitment to both high standards and social inclusiveness” of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

7. The Scottish Government is determined to meet the challenges identified by the HMIE and OECD reports. A more successful Scotland can only be created by developing the talents of all Scotland’s children and young people in this and future generations. This will help to achieve the Government’s principal purpose of sustained economic growth and its strategic objectives for a Scotland that is smarter, safer and stronger, wealthier and fairer, greener and healthier.

8. The Scottish Government believes that National Qualifications have a key role to play in helping to deliver the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. National Qualifications must reflect the curriculum to allow young people to experience a better planned, better connected and more progressive educational experience than at present.

9. In particular, we need to ensure that the next generation of National Qualifications:

- reflects the learning of the new curriculum;
- supports the revised curriculum and does not undermine it by narrowing learning;
- increases the focus on literacy and numeracy and other skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work;
- ensures that assessment is used to support, motivate and challenge young people;
- reduces the current complexity, particularly at SCQF levels 4 and 5 where there are two different qualifications (Standard Grade and Intermediate) with different structures and grading systems;
- provides a range of opportunities to meet the needs of all young people, including those for whom SCQF level 1 (Access 1) is a significant achievement as well as those for whom achievement of qualifications at SCQF level 7 (Advanced Higher) is the goal;
- continues to maintain high standards and credibility with stakeholders, particularly employers, colleges and universities;
- increases flexibility in the time available to achieve qualifications e.g. provides sensible alternatives so that the 'two term dash' is not the only route to Higher; and
- enhances the S6 experience.

The proposals detailed in section 2 are designed to achieve these aims.

10. Our aim is to encourage a flexible approach to a young person's learning during the senior phase from S4 to S6 (or the equivalent in college or other settings) which helps each individual to achieve their full potential. It should encourage, as far as is practicable, personalisation and choice so that each young person can move towards qualifications in the way that best suits their learning. This would represent a shift in culture and would allow, for instance, a young person to pursue a personalised portfolio of qualifications, some taken over a year and some over 18 months or even 2 years. This could reduce the number of external examinations, allow for greater time and a more even pace of study and would enable the period to be used to enhance the broader skills for life and skills for work and the experiences that the young person has developed up to the end of S3.

11. National Qualifications are one measure of judging how well the Scottish education system as a whole is performing. In taking forward the proposals resulting from this consultation, the Scottish Government will work in partnership with HMIE and local government to ensure that changes to the current arrangements are reflected clearly, fairly and progressively in performance management and improvement arrangements for Scottish education.



12. The OECD report highlighted the need for better and more flexible working between national and local government. The proposals resulting from this consultation will be taken forward within the terms of the concordat⁶ agreed between the Scottish Government and local government. The concordat sets out national outcomes which the Scottish Government and local government will aim to deliver. These reflect the Scottish Government's principal purpose and strategic objectives. The national outcomes most relevant to National Qualifications are:

- we are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation; and
- our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

13. The concordat also sets out national indicators and targets to help measure progress towards achieving the national outcomes. The national indicator and target most relevant to the attainment of National Qualifications is to “increase the proportion of school leavers (from Scottish publicly funded schools) in positive and sustained destinations (colleges, higher education, employment or training)”.

14. Work on developing the next generation of National Qualifications will also be linked to the key aims of the Scottish Government's Skills Strategy⁷. In particular, National Qualifications will contribute to the Government's aim of developing a distinctively Scottish approach to skills acquisition, balancing the needs of employers and individuals, aligning skills and employment and placing the individual at the centre of learning and skills development.

15. The package of proposals set out in this consultation and *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* present a number of practical challenges for all those involved in educating our young people (whether in schools, colleges or other settings) and those who support them, for example in local authorities and Initial Teacher Education institutions. Creative thinking and support are required in areas ranging from curriculum planning to assessment. The Scottish Government recognises the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) challenge associated with this and will work closely with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), HMIE and partners in local authorities to lay the foundations for a smooth transition into the new arrangements.

⁶ Further information on the concordat is available on the Scottish Government website – see reference section at the end of this document.

⁷ *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy* (Scottish Government 2007).

section 2:

proposals for the next generation of national qualifications

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section 2: proposals for the next generation of national qualifications

1. This section outlines the Scottish Government's proposals for the next generation of National Qualifications to deliver the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* and meet the needs of Scotland in the 21st Century. Our proposals can be summarised as follows:

- (i) **National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability.** Highers, in particular, will remain the 'gold standard' of the Scottish education system. The content of all qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.
- (ii) **A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications.** The new qualification will be available in a wide range of subjects, as at present. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3. (See Annex A Table 1 for illustration of new qualifications on SCQF Framework.)
- (iii) **New awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.** *Curriculum for Excellence* brings a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in our young people. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government is proposing new separate awards to accredit young people's literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The awards will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The intention is also to ensure that the structure of these awards is flexible enough to make them available to adult learners.
- (iv) **Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people.** Suggestions include:
 - studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;
 - introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
 - encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

2. As set out in *Building the Curriculum 3 – A Framework for Learning and Teaching*, it is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/09. On this basis, approaches based on the new curriculum will be introduced from school year 2009/10. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/13 onwards to ensure smooth progression between the curriculum and qualifications.

3. There are consultation questions at the end of each proposal. You are encouraged to consider these questions and respond using the on-line questionnaire available on the Scottish Government website or the paper version contained in section 5 of this document. (Section 3 provides further details on how to respond.)

PROPOSAL 1

National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability. Highers, in particular, will remain the ‘gold standard’ of the Scottish education system. The content of all National Qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.

1. The current range of Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were introduced in schools and colleges as part of the Higher Still development programme in 1999/2000 and remain highly respected and well-used qualifications.
2. Access qualifications – which are offered at SCQF levels 1, 2 and 3 – are wholly internally assessed and provide valuable opportunities to recognise the learning of students who were previously poorly served by the qualifications system. Access 1 is designed for students who require considerable support with their learning, while Access 2 is designed for students with more moderate support needs. Access 3 is comparable with Standard Grade Foundation level. The popularity of these qualifications (particularly Access 3) is reflected in entry figures, which have shown significant growth since their introduction.
3. Highers – which are at level 6 in the SCQF – remain the ‘gold standard’ of Scottish qualifications and have a lineage dating back to 1888.
4. Advanced Highers – at level 7 in the SCQF – have attracted praise as providing excellent preparation for higher education or employment.
5. National Qualifications must change to reflect the revised curriculum. SQA will undertake a review programme, with the advice and support of key stakeholders in the education and wider community, to ensure that National Qualifications at all levels build upon the experiences and outcomes being developed for the new curriculum.
6. The qualifications system must operate as a cohesive framework. Decisions taken in relation to one part of the framework will impact upon other parts. Although the changes to Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications will be largely focused on content, some technical elements of their structure may well have to be reviewed in the light of decisions taken on the new qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5. This is in order to ensure good articulation and progression routes for young people. A further change may be necessary in relation to introducing compensatory awards (see Proposal 2). This consultation focuses mainly on National Qualifications and the units that make them up. However, the Scottish Government



recognises that there may be consequences for those elements of SQA's portfolio of qualifications used mainly in college based provision. Any changes arising from this consultation will be taken into account in future work relating to this provision.

7. At all levels, the revised system of National Qualifications must ensure that young people have an effective and progressive transition from their broad general education up to the end of S3 into more specialised study for qualifications. The new qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (see Proposal 2) will offer effective progression routes from Access 3 and into Higher and Advanced Higher. This will help to ensure a coherent system of curriculum and qualifications.

8. Every young person should be able to move into the qualifications framework at a level that is appropriate to their needs. For example, vulnerable learners may focus primarily on Access qualifications in S4 and progress either laterally within an SCQF level or through other SCQF levels. The majority of young people should move into the new qualifications at SCQF level 4 or 5 in S4. Some will then be able to progress to Highers at a later point. The most able young people should be free to study for Highers from S4 (see Proposal 4).

9. It is imperative that the timescale for introducing revised qualifications ensures articulation and coherence between the revised curriculum and the qualifications framework, allowing young people to experience a smooth progression from curriculum areas into more specialised study for qualifications from S4 onwards.

PROPOSAL 1 – CONSULTATION QUESTION

National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability. Highers, in particular, will remain the ‘gold standard’ of the Scottish education system. The content of all National Qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.

Q1. Do you welcome the intention to update all qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*? Please comment on any implications to be considered.



PROPOSAL 2

A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications. The new qualification will be available in a wide range of subjects, as at present. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3. (See Annex A Table 1 for illustration of new qualifications on SCQF framework.)

1. Our current system of National Qualifications is successful in many ways. Our young people have the opportunity to obtain challenging but achievable qualifications in a wide range of subject areas. Our qualifications system is in general highly regarded by employers, universities, colleges, parents and young people themselves. However, there is evidence that some elements of our current system are not easy to understand or use. There are particular issues around National Qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (Standard Grade Credit and General/Intermediate 1 and 2).

2. Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications were intended originally for different year groups and they have different structures and purposes. However, some complexity and blurring of purposes has arisen over the years. The OECD report observes that one of the original aims of Standard Grade was to provide an 'exit' qualification for young people who intended to leave school at the end of S4 at a time when many more did so. This raises issues over whether the present arrangements for assessing and certifying Standard Grade remain appropriate. The OECD report suggested that Standard Grade inhibits the provision of more progressive programmes for learning, particularly in vocational options. The report also expressed concerns over whether Standard Grade prepares young people adequately for qualifications at more advanced levels of study.

3. Most Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications are designed for young people in S5 and S6 (ages 16 to 18) and for use in colleges. (Some Intermediate qualifications such as Skills for Work have been designed specially for the 14 to 16 age group.) There is a relatively small, but growing, trend for some schools and education authorities to offer Intermediate qualifications to S3 and S4 pupils (ages 14 to 16) in place of Standard Grades. Several reasons have been suggested for this, such as Intermediate qualifications providing more up-to-date course content and better progression routes to Higher in some subject areas. However, there are some concerns about whether this younger age group always has the maturity to study these qualifications successfully.

4. The OECD report recommended that “a Scottish Certificate of Education be developed to sanction completion of an approved programme of studies or training, whether in school, college or employment. This ‘graduation’ certificate would have defined minimum requirements to reflect the purposes of the new 3-18 curriculum but also substantial flexibility as to content, level and duration of studies to ensure accessibility”.

5. The Scottish Government has considered carefully the issues but decided not to accept this recommendation. We believe that there are significant advantages – in terms of stability and public understanding of the system – in retaining those qualifications which are seen to be working extremely well.

6. The OECD report recommended that “Standard Grade examinations be phased out as the new 3-18 curriculum is implemented and as clearer and more effective pathways are established for the whole range of young people”. The Scottish Government agrees that Standard Grade does not fully meet the needs of Scotland in the 21st Century. We will retain some of the best features of Standard Grade in the new qualification, particularly its inclusive ethos.

7. Annex B explains the broad design principles that will be used for the new qualification and which will underpin future developments in qualifications at other levels. With specific reference to the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5, research with stakeholder groups identified the following as the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications:

- the ‘inclusive’ approach to certification contained in Standard Grade; and
- the ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications.

In addition, stakeholders commented that assessment must be closely integrated with learning and teaching approaches.

Proposed features of the new qualification

8. The proposed features of the new qualification are as follows:

- it will cover two levels – SCQF 4 and 5 – and will be available in a wide range of subjects;
- it will have a unit based structure with the units assessed and possibly graded by teachers;
- the notional course duration will be similar to the existing arrangements for Intermediate qualifications;
- external examinations will be retained at all levels where they are currently used for certification;
- the course award will reflect performance both in units and in the external examination. (The consultation will explore ways in which units could contribute to the overall course award);



- the course award will be graded A-D (A-C is a pass and D a 'near miss', as in present Intermediate courses. There is an option to extend grading to E); and
- there will be compensatory arrangements for those failing the final examination. (This consultation will explore options for compensatory awards.)

Reasons for proposing these features

Coherence and progression

9. The aim is to promote coherence and progression in keeping with the principles for curriculum design. The young person should be able to move into the qualifications framework at the level that is appropriate to their needs. For example, the majority of young people should move into the new qualifications at SCQF level 4 or 5 in S4. Some will then be able to progress to Highers at a later point.

Unit based structure

10. A unit based structure would provide flexibility to meet the diversity of young people's needs, including those requiring more choices and more chances. This is because a unit based structure helps with setting short-term goals. This makes learning more manageable and provides greater motivation by enabling a young person to build up a series of achievements over a programme of study.

Opportunity to grade internally assessed units

11. Units would be assessed internally and moderated externally. This would reflect current practice in National Qualifications. At present though, units carry relatively little credibility. Our research from our engagement activity suggests that this is because they are currently marked and graded on a pass/fail basis with the content levelled at minimum competence.

12. We would like to improve the credibility of units by introducing a form of assessment that recognises the efforts of young people more effectively than at present. One way to achieve this would be to design unit assessments that allow young people to demonstrate the full range of learning. These assessments could be marked and graded on a scale A-C to accredit successful performance. Assigning grades to units in this way would enable candidates to demonstrate a range of ability levels and would help them prepare for the final external assessment. This would increase the credibility of units when they are used both as part of a course and in other ways, such as freestanding units or in programmes of study made up by colleges.

Course award that reflects performance in units and in the external examination

13. The Scottish Government is committed to retaining external examinations where these are currently used for certification. There may be scope for making better use of different types of assessment alongside external examinations, such as projects, performances and practical tasks depending on the nature of each course. Detailed proposals would be developed following this consultation. These could be subject to sign off by a national stakeholder group to ensure overall coherence.

14. Unit assessments that are marked and graded as described above could then allow for greater flexibility in what was assessed in the external examination. Unit assessments designed in this way could contribute to the overall course awards. They could, for example, contribute a percentage to the total marks. They could also be used in other ways such as providing evidence for appeals.

15. At present, teaching staff mark unit assessments in National Qualifications and determine pass or fail against a given threshold. Under this proposal, unit assessments would be marked by teachers who would be required to assign a grade rather than pass or fail. There will be a requirement to offer support for the implementation of any new system of assessment so that standards can be shared, understood and applied.

16. At present, data on performance in qualifications is collected and analysed at national and local level. This data is based on full course awards. Giving greater recognition for partial achievement (unit passes) would provide a fuller picture of student attainment. This could be reflected in future performance monitoring systems.

Course duration

17. Presently the majority of National Qualifications are made up of 3 x 40 hour units. There are some exceptions, such as Standard Grade (which is not unitised) and Skills for Work qualifications (which consist of four units and have no external examination). Under the proposal, there would be greater flexibility in the size of units if this meets the requirements of the subject. However, we would not generally expect the total number of units for a National Qualification to exceed four.

Compensatory arrangements for those failing the final examination

18. The Scottish Government wishes to introduce arrangements so that young people failing an examination have their learning towards that qualification recognised formally in some way. To promote consistency, compensatory awards would also be introduced for Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.



19. The following options are available for the compensatory arrangements:

Option A Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E.

This could be seen as the most inclusive option. However, past experience and knowledge of other qualifications systems suggests that there could be a risk that only grades A-C are considered as ‘good’ passes, particularly by colleges, universities and employers.

Option B Recognise unit passes only.

This could be seen as the option which most clearly reflects achievement at the level of course studied. This reflects present arrangements, but if grading of units is adopted this would provide unit passes with greater credibility and a better indication of actual achievement.

Option C Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded.

This option would allow positive recognition of learning at the level studied. The main issues with this option are in relation to how stakeholders would view a compensatory ungraded award and what value it would hold both for them and the young person.

Option D Compensatory grade C award at the level of course below that studied.

This option has featured in previous arrangements and was considered to be too low a level of award for the work done and units passed.

Option E Compensatory grade A award at the level of course below that studied.

Compensatory awards at grade A have previously been part of the arrangements for National Qualifications but were removed due to concerns that this was over-generous. This led to the introduction of the current grade D award at the level of course studied.

Name of new qualification

20. The proposed name for the new qualification is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). However, the Scottish Government is open to other suggestions.

PROPOSAL 2 – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications. The new qualification will be available in a wide range of subjects, as at present. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3. (See Annex A Table 1 for illustration of new qualifications on SCQF framework.)

Q2. Early consultation has identified the ‘best’ features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications as:

- the ‘inclusive’ approach to certification contained in Standard Grade; and
- the ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications.

Are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?

Q3. One of the proposals is to grade units. Do you agree that units should be graded A-C rather than pass/fail?

Q4. Do you want graded units to count towards the final award?

Q5. Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support? Please select one option or suggest an alternative.

Option A Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E.

Option B Recognise unit passes only.

Option C Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded.

Option D Compensatory grade C award at the level of course below that studied.

Option E Compensatory grade A award at the level of course below that studied.

Q6. The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not, please offer an alternative and explain your choice.



PROPOSAL 3

New awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.

Curriculum for Excellence brings a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in our young people. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government is proposing new separate awards to accredit young people's literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The awards will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The intention is also to ensure that the structure of these awards is flexible enough to make them available to adult learners.

1. The OECD report suggests that Scotland performs at a consistently high standard in mathematics, reading and science in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
2. However, the OECD report also identified challenges that Scottish education needs to address. In particular, children from the poorer communities in our country are still more likely than others to under-achieve. The Scottish Government does not regard this as acceptable. If Scotland is to achieve sustainable economic development and become smarter, safer and stronger, wealthier and fairer, greener and healthier, we must create learning programmes that develop the skills, talents and confidence of all our young people. As an essential part of this, we must make sure that all our children and young people develop good quality skills in literacy and numeracy. This will help in taking forward the national indicator of increasing the proportion of school leavers (from Scottish publicly funded schools) in positive and sustained destinations (colleges, higher education, employment or training) discussed in section 1 of this document. The HMIE report, *Improving Scottish Education*, also recommended that “there is a need to be much more rigorous and explicit about the development and certification of essential skills, particularly literacy and numeracy. This requirement goes beyond pupils with specific difficulties to encompass all pupils, including those entering higher education”.
3. *Curriculum for Excellence* offers the opportunity to ensure that there is a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching* sets out the context for this approach. This will help to achieve the programme's wider vision of improved attainment and generally improved outcomes, particularly for young people in need of more choices and more chances. There are also important links to be made with *Skills for Scotland* – the Scottish Government's Lifelong Skills Strategy, which shows how every part of our education and learning systems can contribute to giving Scotland a world-class skills base.

4. A first step in this has been to release draft experiences and outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The supporting papers, *Literacy Across the Curriculum*⁸ and *Numeracy Across the Curriculum*⁹, emphasise that all teaching staff have a role to play in developing literacy and numeracy skills for all our young people.

5. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government proposes developing new awards to accredit literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so. The awards should be flexible enough in structure to make them available to adult learners.

Proposed features of the new awards

6. The proposed features of the new awards are as follows:

- there will be separate awards for literacy and numeracy, both available at SCQF levels 3 to 5; and
- the awards will accredit a broad range of skills on the basis of internally assessed evidence from a young person's work across the curriculum and an externally assessed examination.

7. To promote consistency, the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy will be graded in the same way as other National Qualifications. It is important that these awards have credibility and parity of esteem with other qualifications.

Reasons for proposing these features

Separate awards available at SCQF levels 3 to 5

8. The main objective of the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy is to accredit the skills in literacy and in numeracy that a young person has developed. There will be an expectation that all young people will be entered for the awards. Separate awards at SCQF levels 3 to 5 will give as many young people as possible the opportunity to receive this accreditation. The awards should also be made available in the college sector to post-school and adult learners. This will enable this group to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and be accredited for their achievements.

⁸ Literacy Across the Curriculum – see reference section at the end of this document.

⁹ Numeracy Across the Curriculum – see reference section at the end of this document.



Accreditation of a broad range of skills

9. The awards will be designed to accredit a broad range of skills in literacy and numeracy. Examples of the skills which could be assessed are:

Literacy

Using skills in listening, talking, reading and writing to:

- communicate with others;
- reflect on and explain thinking;
- analyse and interpret information; and
- use language creatively.

Numeracy

- basic number processes – four operations (addition, subtraction, division and multiplication), percentage, simple fractions;
- understanding time, timetables, time management and social implications of punctuality;
- money – using, managing, planning, earning;
- information handling – sourcing (electronically and physically), interrogating, processing and decision making; and
- chance and uncertainty – concept of probability, how statistics can be misleading, probability of events happening e.g. towns being flooded due to climate change.

This will ensure that our young people are gaining experience in skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. The awards will also provide employers and other users of qualifications with a clear and credible record of the skills that our young people have developed.

Assessment

10. Given the sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills throughout a young person's education, we propose that the awards should draw upon internally assessed evidence from a young person's work across the curriculum as well as being externally assessed through an examination. For those who have already left school and/or have not experienced the revised curriculum, the internally assessed element of the awards would draw upon work done in college, employment or through social, voluntary and cultural activities.

11. These qualifications will be made available at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5 to enable as many young people as possible to attain an appropriate level of award. Schools and colleges should be mindful of the need to strike an appropriate balance between providing opportunities for young people to demonstrate a higher level of achievement and imposing an unnecessary assessment burden. For example, the Scottish Government does not expect individuals to be presented for these awards in each year from S4 to S6.

Timing of assessment for the awards

12. We would welcome views on when young people should be assessed for the Scottish Certificates in Literacy and in Numeracy. Possible options are:

Option A At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations.

Option B In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations.

Option C At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.

Implications for curriculum planners

13. For young people leaving at the end of S4, the expectation is that they would be able to follow a maximum of five courses leading to qualifications during the year, in addition to taking the awards in literacy and in numeracy. Having demonstrated their literacy and numeracy skills through the new awards, some young people might choose not to take English and Mathematics at the same level, opting to concentrate on subjects in which they may achieve stronger results and on which they might build future learning at college or with an employer. Many young people, however, will still elect to take English and Mathematics at the same or higher levels.

14. In taking forward detailed proposals for the awards, the Scottish Government will work with SQA and stakeholder groups to ensure that the new awards complement revised qualifications in English and Mathematics at SCQF levels 3 to 5. It will be necessary to revise the English and Mathematics qualifications to reflect the changes caused by the introduction of awards in literacy and numeracy. This provides an opportunity for English and Mathematics courses to focus on areas of learning which are not presently covered in depth.



PROPOSAL 3 – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

New awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.

Curriculum for Excellence brings a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in our young people. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government is proposing new separate awards to accredit young people's literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The awards will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The intention is also to ensure that the structure of these awards is flexible enough to make them available to adult learners.

Q7. Do you agree with the proposal to offer literacy and numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5)? If not please offer an alternative.

Q8. National Qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) do not have an external examination. Do you agree that any new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an external examination?

Q9. Should the weighting between the internal and external assessments for the literacy and numeracy awards be equal? If not should more weight be attached to the internal or external assessment? Please explain.

- Equal weight
- More weight to internal assessment
- More weight to external assessment

Q10. When should young people be assessed for literacy and numeracy awards?

Option A At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations.

Option B In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations.

Option C At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.

PROPOSAL 4

Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people. Suggestions include:

- studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;
- introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
- encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

1. There have been some long-standing concerns about the uneven nature of pace, challenge and achievement in secondary school education. These have been highlighted in the OECD report. The HMIE report, *Improving Scottish Education*, also recommended that “the main focus for improvement in secondary schools should be on improving learning by engaging, challenging and motivating all young people better and encouraging in them a greater sense of responsibility and independence”.

2. One of the main aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* is to provide a better planned, better connected and more progressive educational experience for our children and young people. *Curriculum for Excellence* will provide a rich general education reflecting the traditional strengths of a broad Scottish curriculum including the development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work such as literacy and numeracy; an active and healthy lifestyle and an appreciation of Scotland and its place in the world.

3. The senior phase of the curriculum will provide a continuing entitlement to experiences which allow every young person to develop further the attributes and capabilities of successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. A very important feature of this phase is that the young person will build up a portfolio of qualifications. Essential skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work, most notably literacy and numeracy, should be consolidated and extended. However, it will not be possible to deliver all aspects of the curriculum through qualifications alone. There should also be a continuing emphasis, for example, on health and wellbeing including physical activity.

4. This requires learning and teaching to strike a better balance between developing in our young people the skills for passing examinations and equipping them with skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. The Scottish Government therefore wishes to consult on the following suggestions for encouraging greater flexibility to better meet the needs of young people in the senior phase of education. These are:

- studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;



- introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
- encouraging the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

Reasons for making these proposals

Encouraging greater flexibility to study National Qualifications over 18 months or 2 years as well as one year

5. A system that allows young people to study National Qualifications over a more extended period of time would:

- reduce the current pressures on some young people from the ‘two term dash’ to Higher;
- increase opportunities to raise attainment by allowing greater time and a more even pace of study for National Qualifications;
- enable those staying on beyond S4 to attain more Higher level qualifications or to gather more qualifications at SCQF levels 4 or 5; and
- free up time for schools to provide a better balance between preparing for exams and developing other skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life.

6. The ultimate decision on whether this is taken up will lie with individual schools and local authorities. The Scottish Government will work with these and other key stakeholder groups including higher education institutions and employers to encourage debate on this matter, particularly as it relates to Higher and Advanced Higher.

Introducing a winter diet of examinations

7. The main benefits of this would be:

- to provide greater flexibility for young people to study qualifications over different periods of time. This includes creating new opportunities for 18 month National Qualifications; and
- to be used at the end of school education for ‘Christmas leavers’ in S5 to take qualifications including the literacy and numeracy awards.

8. The Scottish Government is aware that there was a previous attempt to introduce a winter diet of examinations, although it only ran for one year. However, *Curriculum for Excellence* is creating a new context for Scottish education. The Scottish Government therefore believes that the time is right to reconsider the idea, particularly in view of the benefits it could bring.

Encouraging the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and to study for Highers from S4 onwards

9. The main benefits of this would be that it:

- increases the amount of time available for developing other skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life;

- reduces the amount of time spent on external examinations; and
- provides greater opportunities for the most able young people to take more Higher and Advanced Higher courses than at present over the whole senior phase.

10. As with the proposal to extend the period for studying Highers and Advanced Highers, the ultimate decision on whether to bypass qualifications at lower levels from S4 onwards will lie with schools and local authorities. The Scottish Government is aware that this will require a significant cultural shift amongst the education and wider community. Some parents may also need to be persuaded of the benefits of this approach (although others have said that there is too much emphasis on passing external examinations). There is also a view that attaining lower level qualifications before Highers enables schools, young people and parents to take stock of progress and make the right choices in future learning. Young people, teachers and parents value qualifications as providing ‘exam practice’, particularly for progression onto Highers. These views need to be balanced against the benefits described above.

Increasing flexibility in qualifications

11. These suggestions will encourage a flexible approach to a young person’s learning during the senior phase (from S4 to S6) that will help each to achieve their potential. They would reduce the number of external examinations and allow greater time and a more even pace of study where that would be of benefit to the individual. This would enable the period to be used to enhance the broader skills for life and skills for work and other learning experiences that the young person has developed up to the end of S3.

Policy on early presentation

12. We are also aware that some schools and local authorities have sought to increase pace, challenge and achievement in other ways by entering cohorts of pupils for qualifications before the end of S3. The Scottish Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the principles set out in the national guidance on early presentation issued in 2005. Decisions about early presentation have to be made in the best interests of individual pupils – not classes, cohorts or year groups. The Scottish Government would not want early presentation for examinations to continue, except where an individual young person has exceptional circumstances. It is important that the full period up to the end of S3 provides a rich curriculum allowing young people to study and have experiences both across a broad range and in depth. If necessary, the Scottish Government will strengthen the existing guidance on when young people can be presented for National Qualifications and/or arrange for Age and Stage regulations to be introduced to reinforce this policy. As signalled in *Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching*, young people will still have the opportunity to begin study for appropriate Skills for Work qualifications (which do not have an examination) before S4.



PROPOSAL 4 – CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people. Suggestions include:

- studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;
- introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
- encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

Q11. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?

Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations?

Q13. If you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations, what subjects and levels of qualifications might first be offered?

Q14. Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?

Q15. Do you have any other ideas for increasing flexibility within the senior phase (S4 to S6)?

section 3:

how to respond

SUSTAINABILITY



RURAL COMMUNITIES

FAIRNESS

EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT

SECTION 3 – HOW TO RESPOND

We are inviting written responses to this consultation paper by **Friday 31 October 2008**.

You can fill in an **on-line questionnaire** on the Scottish Government website at www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations (look for the consultation title among the list of 'current' consultations. The on-line form is located at the top of the contents page).

Or

You can cut out **The Consultation Questions** (section 5) along the scissor lines provided or print off a copy from the Scottish Government website at www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations (look for the consultation title among the list of 'current' consultations).

Please remember to include the **Respondent Information Form** (section 4) which can also be cut out or printed from the website.

Please post your completed forms to:

Qualifications Consultation CRE 1013
CSU, Spur U5b Saughton House
Broomhouse Drive
Edinburgh
EH11 3XD

This consultation, and all other Scottish Government consultation exercises, can be viewed on-line on the consultation web pages of the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>. You can telephone Freephone 0800 77 1234 to find out where your nearest public internet access point is.

The Scottish Government now has an e-mail alert system for consultations (SEconsult: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/seconsult.aspx>). This system allows stakeholder individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly e-mail containing details of all new consultations (including web links). SE consult complements, but in no way replaces Scottish Government distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to keep up to date with all Scottish Government consultation activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We would encourage you to register.

Handling your response

We need to know how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are happy for your response to be made public. As mentioned above, please complete and

return the **Respondent Information Form** (section 4) with your response as this will ensure that we treat your response appropriately. If you ask for your response not to be published we will regard it as confidential and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public (see the attached **Respondent Information Form** (section 4), these will be made available to the public in the Scottish Government library by 28 November 2008 and on the Scottish Government consultation web pages by 5 December 2008. We will check all responses where agreement to publish has been given for any potentially defamatory material before logging them in the library or placing them on the website. You can make arrangements to view responses by contacting the Scottish Government library on 0131 244 4552. Responses can be copied and sent to you, but a charge may be made for this service.

What happens next?

Following the close of the consultation we will examine all the views submitted carefully. We will then produce a report on the views expressed in the consultation, our responses to them, and any changes to our proposals following the consultation.

Comments and complaints

We would welcome comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted. If you have any please send them to:

Alison Groat
Qualifications, Assessment and Skills
Schools Directorate
Scottish Government
2A (South)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Or e-mail them, marked for Alison Groat's attention, to:
qualificationsconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Alternative copies

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and large print formats and in community languages. Please contact:

اس دستاویز کے کاپیوں کی درخواستیں پانچ زبانوں میں کی جاسکتی ہیں اور ان کی کاپیاں
بڑے فونٹ کے ساتھ اور آڈیو کے ساتھ بھی فراہم کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ براہ کرم رابطہ کریں:

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Cheibhèar Jèthibhèaran a fìbheachil ann an cruith
ria an òistear, ann an òistear agus ann an canoin
cruithrean-saèl. Cuir fios gu:

इस दस्तावेज़/कागजात की और प्रतियाँ, मांगी जाने पर, ऑडियो
टैप पर और बड़े अक्षरों में तथा कम्यूनिटी भाषाओं में मिल
सकती हैं, कृपया संपर्क करें:

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼/ਕਾਗਜ਼ਾਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ ਕਾਪੀਆਂ, ਮੰਗੀ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ,
ਔਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ ਉੱਪਰ ਅਤੇ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਕੰਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ
ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ. ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

此文件有更多備份，如果需要，語言版本和入字體版
本及少數種族語言版本也可提供，請聯絡：

ہندوستان کے مختلف شہروں میں اس دستاویز کی کاپیاں
میں بھی فراہم کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ براہ کرم رابطہ کریں:

Aby otrzywać niniejszy dokument w innej wersji językowej, na kasecie
lub w wersji z powiększonym drukiem, prosimy o kontakt:

Alison Groat
Qualifications, Assessment and Skills
Schools Directorate
Scottish Government
2A (South)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

tel: 0131 244 0232
e-mail: qualificationsconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

section 5:

the consultation questions

RESPONSIVE CITIZENS



EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTORS

SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALS



section 5: the consultation questions

Please note that the Respondent Information Form MUST be returned with your response.

As indicated in section 3 – How to Respond, responses can be submitted on-line, or on a copy of the questionnaire printed from the website, or by cutting out and completing this section of the document. Additional paper should be used if you wish to provide more extended responses but please ensure that any such pages include your identifying details.

Name/Organisation: _____

PROPOSAL 1

National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability. Highers, in particular, will remain the ‘gold standard’ of the Scottish education system. The content of all National Qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.

Q1. Do you welcome the intention to update all qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*? Please comment on any implications to be considered.

YES

NO

Comment

PROPOSAL 2

A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications. The new qualification will be available in a wide range of subjects, as at present. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3. (See Annex A Table 1 for illustration of new qualifications on SCQF framework.)

Q2. Early consultation has identified the ‘best’ features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications as:

- the ‘inclusive’ approach to certification contained in Standard Grade; and
- the ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications.

Are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?

Comment

Q3. One of the proposals is to grade units. Do you agree that units should be graded A-C rather than pass/fail?

YES

NO

Explanation



Q4. Do you want graded units to count towards the final award?

YES

NO

Explanation

Q5. Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support?

Please tick one option or suggest an alternative.

- Option A Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E.
- Option B Recognise unit passes only.
- Option C Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded.
- Option D Compensatory grade C award at the level of course below that studied.
- Option E Compensatory grade A award at the level of course below that studied.

Explanation/other suggestion

Q6. The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not please offer an alternative and explain your choice.

YES

NO

Explanation/other suggestion

PROPOSAL 3

New awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.

Curriculum for Excellence brings a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in our young people. To help strengthen this focus, the Scottish Government is proposing new separate awards to accredit young people's literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The awards will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so. The intention is also to ensure that the structure of these awards is flexible enough to make them available to adult learners.

Q7. Do you agree with the proposal to offer literacy and numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5)? If not please offer an alternative.

YES

NO

Explanation/other suggestion

Q8. National Qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) do not have an external examination. Do you agree that any new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an external examination?

YES

NO

Explanation



Q9. Should the weighting between the internal and external assessments for the literacy and numeracy awards be equal? If not should more weight be attached to the internal or external assessment? Please explain.

- Equal weight
- More weight to internal assessment
- More weight to external assessment

Explanation

Q10. When should young people be assessed for literacy and numeracy awards?

Please tick one option.

- Option A** **At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations.**
- Option B** **In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations.**
- Option C** **At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.**

Explanation

PROPOSAL 4

Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people. Suggestions include:

- studying National Qualifications over 18 months (or 2 years) as well as one year;
- introducing a winter diet of examinations; and
- encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards.

Q11. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?

YES

NO

Explanation

Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations?

YES

NO

Q13. If you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations, what subjects and levels of qualifications might first be offered?

Suggestions



Q14. Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?

YES

NO

Explanation

Q15. Do you have any other ideas for increasing flexibility within the senior phase (S4 to S6)?

Suggestions

TIMELINE

Q16. It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/09, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from school year 2009/10. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/13 onwards to ensure smooth progression between the curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment on any implications to be considered.

YES

NO

Comment



ANY OTHER COMMENTS?



ANY OTHER COMMENTS?



annex a: scottish credit and qualifications framework

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is the common language of education and training in Scotland. Each qualification is allocated a level according to how demanding the qualification is.

Table 1: Including Proposed New Qualifications

This table illustrates where the new qualifications may be included. Any changes will need to be agreed with the SCQF partnership following this consultation.

| Table of main qualifications | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| SCQF level | SQA National Units, Courses and Group Awards | Higher Education | Scottish Vocational Qualifications |
| 12 | | Doctorates | |
| 11 | | Masters | SVQ 5 |
| 10 | | Honours Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate* | |
| 9 | | Ordinary Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate* | |
| 8 | | Higher National Diploma Diploma in Higher Education | SVQ 4 |
| 7 | Advanced Higher | Higher National Certificate Certificate in Higher Education | |
| 6 | Higher | | SVQ 3 |
| 5 | New Advanced General qualification (to replace Standard Credit and Intermediate 2) Literacy and Numeracy qualifications | | SVQ 2 |
| 4 | New General qualification (to replace Standard General and Intermediate 1) Literacy and Numeracy qualifications | | SVQ 1 |
| 3 | Access 3 Literacy and Numeracy qualifications | | |
| 2 | Access 2 | | |
| 1 | Access 1 | | |

* These qualifications are differentiated by volume of outcomes and may be offered at either level



Table 2: Existing Framework

| Table of main qualifications | | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| SCQF level | SQA National Units, Courses and Group Awards | Higher Education | Scottish Vocational Qualifications |
| 12 | | Doctorates | |
| 11 | | Masters | SVQ 5 |
| 10 | | Honours Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate* | |
| 9 | | Ordinary Degree Graduate Diploma/Certificate* | |
| 8 | | Higher National Diploma Diploma in Higher Education | SVQ 4 |
| 7 | Advanced Higher | Higher National Certificate Certificate in Higher Education | |
| 6 | Higher | | SVQ 3 |
| 5 | Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade | | SVQ 2 |
| 4 | Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade | | SVQ 1 |
| 3 | Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade | | |
| 2 | Access 2 | | |
| 1 | Access 1 | | |

* These qualifications are differentiated by volume of outcomes and may be offered at either level

annex b: design principles for national qualifications

Qualifications arrangements should support the values, purposes and principles outlined in *Curriculum for Excellence*.

- 1 **Inclusiveness.** Arrangements must provide credible recognition of the achievements of all young people within a common framework. Young people will achieve different levels of performance and will progress in different ways: qualifications arrangements should reflect these differences, not create them.
- 2 **High standards.** Qualifications arrangements should support best practice in teaching, promoting deep and effective learning. The arrangements should encourage all young people to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.
- 3 **Relevance.** Outcomes assessed within the qualifications system should be developed from and closely linked to the purposes of learning 3-18 and the four capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors). Outcomes should include 'vocational' alongside 'academic' in a way that enables them to be given equal value.
- 4 **Skills.** Qualifications should provide explicit recognition for all young people of assessed levels of competence in a small number of essential areas, including literacy and numeracy.
- 5 **Progression.** The arrangements should enable young people to build upon their prior understandings and capabilities and lay down firm foundations for future learning, employment and engagement in society as confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Outcomes should be grouped into clusters which have their own integrity. These should enable young people to accumulate knowledge and skills, to make connections across areas of learning where appropriate, and also to progress. There should be rich opportunities for both 'lateral' and suitably-staged 'vertical' progression.

An important subset of achievements will be recognised in the form of qualifications in ways that are fit for purpose.

- 6 **Fitness for purpose.** Assessment methodologies should support and fit the purposes of the intended outcomes of learning. To do this they should make use of the diversity of techniques which can be used to gain evidence of performance. Assessment should be proportionate – neither over-burdensome nor too light-touch for the purpose.
- 7 **Fairness.** Young people's achievements and performances should be judged fairly. There should be safeguards to ensure that judgements made by teachers and other assessors are comparable and that they give a fair assessment against defined national standards.



- 8 **Credibility/Reliability.** The arrangements for qualifications should command confidence so that they will be valued by young people, parents, employers and further and higher education. They should confirm that a young person has achieved what would be expected at a particular level, and support predictions of future success.
- 9 **Usefulness.** Qualifications should serve the purposes expected of them by employers, further and higher education, parents, and young people themselves. They should be as easy to understand as possible.

Arrangements for qualifications for young people in the senior phase (S4 to S6) will form part of the overall framework of qualifications for lifelong learning in Scotland and should build on existing good practice.

- 10 **Age and stage.** The arrangements should take account of the needs of learners in the senior phase and recognise where these may be different from those of older learners. Expectations should take account of issues of maturity where appropriate. There should be nothing within the arrangements that encourages presentation for qualifications at an age earlier than is in the best interests of the young person.
- 11 **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.** Each qualification should carry a credit rating and level within SCQF and enable young people to make further progress within the qualifications framework in a straightforward way.
- 12 **Building on good practice.** Developments should recognise and build on the principles and best practice of Standard Grade and National Qualifications.
- 13 **Structures.** Structures should support the achievement of the above aims. Where existing features are fit for these purposes they should continue to be used. Structures should be flexible and facilitate school/college collaboration.
- 14 **Feasibility/Deliverability.** Teacher assessment workload should be considered. The extent of changes should be carefully justified, evaluated and costed. Plans for implementation should take careful account of the capacity of SQA, local authorities and schools, LTS and other partners to deliver, should build on the work of *Assessment is for Learning* and should be supported by suitable continuing professional development.

annex c: the scottish government consultation process

Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Government working methods. Given the wide-ranging areas of work of the Scottish Government, there are many varied types of consultation. However, in general, Scottish Government consultation exercises aim to provide opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

The Scottish Government encourages consultation that is thorough, effective and appropriate to the issue under consideration and the nature of the target audience. Consultation exercises take account of a wide range of factors and no two exercises are likely to be the same.

Typically, Scottish Government consultations involve a written paper inviting answers to specific questions or more general views about the material presented. Written papers are distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in the issue, and they are also placed on the Scottish Government website enabling a wider audience to access the paper and submit their responses. Consultation exercises may also involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as through public meetings, focus groups or questionnaire exercises¹⁰. Copies of all the written responses received to a consultation exercise (except those where the individual or organisation requested confidentiality) are placed in the Scottish Government library at Saughton House, Edinburgh (K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh EH11 3XD, telephone 0131 244 4565).

All Scottish Government consultation papers and related publications (e.g. analysis of response reports) can be accessed at: Scottish Government consultations (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>).

The views and suggestions detailed in consultation responses are analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review;
- inform the development of a particular policy;
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals;
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented.

Final decisions on the issues under consideration will also take account of a range of other factors, including other available information and research evidence.

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

¹⁰ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>



annex d: web links and references

Curriculum for Excellence

Further information on *Curriculum for Excellence* can be obtained using the following web link
<http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk>

Literacy across the Curriculum

<http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/outcomes/literacyandenglish/index.asp>

Numeracy across the Curriculum

<http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/outcomes/numeracy/index.asp>

National Qualifications

Quick Guide to National Qualifications (SEED, SQA, LTS, SFEU, 2006)

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/nq/nqframework/nqguide.asp>

Insight 11, *An Evaluation of the Higher Still Reforms* (SEED, 2003)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/12/18605/29830>

Guidance on the appropriate age and stage when young people can be presented for externally assessed qualifications, SEED Circular 03/2005

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/07/29105352/53535>

OECD report on *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*

Further information and copies of the report are available on the following link

www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264040991

HMIE report on *Improving Scottish Education*

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/Publications.aspx>

Assessment is for Learning

Further information on *Assessment is for Learning* is available on the following link

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/>

Concordat between Scottish Government and local government

Further information on the concordat is available on the Scottish Government website

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/concordat>

Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0>

Scottish Parliament

Reports, minutes and papers of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee and its predecessor committee are available on the following link:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/ellc/index.htm>

The *Report on Pupil Motivation* can be accessed on the following link:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/reports-06/edr06-03.htm>





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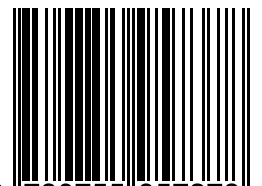
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