

Our Ref: AGH/MW/NEXTGENRESPONSE0610

6 October 2008

Principal: A. Graeme Hyslop BA (Hons) MSc FRSA

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Qualifications Consultation CRE 1013
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EDINBURGH
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Dear Sir/Madam

**A CONSULTATION ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS IN SCOTLAND**

Please find enclosed Langside College's response to the above consultation together with the Respondent Information Form and the completed Consultation Questionnaire.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



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Principal

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SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

CONSULTATION ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN SCOTLAND

RESPONSE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Langside College in Glasgow welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the consultation paper. As a large community college with a wide ranging portfolio of learning programmes at a multiplicity of levels, the College feels particularly well placed to respond to the Scottish Government's call for views.
- 1.2 Likewise, as a college which delivers an extensive range of Highers, Advanced Highers and 'A' Level provision - we present significantly more candidates for Highers annually than the largest of Scotland's secondary schools - the College believes it has a unique interest in the 'senior' school portfolio.
- 1.3 The College has contributed extensively to the *Curriculum for Excellence* programme since its inception under the previous and present administrations.

The Principal has been involved at a strategic level as a member of the Curriculum Review Group, the Programme Board for

implementation of the framework and, more recently, as a member of the Management Board. The College has supported a range of activity which Scotland's Colleges (SFEU and ASC), with local authorities (particularly Glasgow City Council) and with other partners.

In 2007 the Board of Management approved a refreshed Teaching and Learning Strategy which takes account of CfE (a copy of the strategy is attached for ease of reference)

Specific continuous professional development has been directed towards College staff in order to support the implementation of CfE and it is our intention to devote a significant part of our 2009 CPD Conference to CfE.

- 1.4 The College fully recognises and wholeheartedly supports the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning's aspiration that *Curriculum for Excellence* should play a significant role in creating a more successful Scotland with opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. Colleges, like Langside College, are very well placed to make this aspiration a reality for learners throughout their lives.
- 1.5 The College recognises that such a fundamental adjustment to the learning (and teaching) system in Scotland requires change to national qualifications in order to meet the needs of Scotland in the 21st Century. Whilst the case for change is a compelling one Langside College does have some concerns with respect to implementation and the role which the College sector is expected to play.
- 1.6 Recent discussions between the Association of Scotland's Colleges and Lifelong Learning Directorate do give real cause for optimism with respect to Langside Colleges' concerns. We believe it is both feasible and necessary that:

- the College sector is properly represented at all levels in the CfE management and implementation process;
- members of staff in colleges are given the same staff and curriculum development opportunities as schools staff (at nursery, primary and secondary levels).
- funding for development (already identified in the Strategic Spending Review) includes an element/proportion for colleges;
- this would be of particular importance in the context of the proposed Scottish Teaching and Assessment Resource (STAR) project and GLOW;
- college sector development bodies (Scotland's Colleges SFEU and COLEG, in particular) are properly placed and supported in the implementation process; and
- the credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) which forms a backcloth (a 'satnav' as the Cabinet Secretary so aptly described it) takes full and unequivocal account of the qualifications which are offered by Scotland's Colleges;

It is surprising and deeply disappointing to note that the Tables (1 and 2) which are presented in the consultation document (Annex A) ignore the national certificates and Scottish Progression Awards which are taken by over 20,000 college students on a full and part time basis (often as Intermediate 2 and 3) in Scotland each year (more than all the other 'levels' put together).

This 'oversight' must be rectified if the consultation or the outcome of it is to be taken seriously.

2 THE CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

- 2.1 Langside College has answered each appropriate consultation question. Our comments relate to both the Scottish learning system as a whole, and from time to time, the potential college sector contribution to CfE implementation.

- 2.2 Having contributed to the discussions surrounding it, the College supports the consultation response submitted by the Association of Scotland's colleges.
- 2.3 The Langside College response is attached as Annex 1.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Langside College is very supportive (with the caveats set out in section 1.6) of the CfE implementation programme and the proposals for the 'Next Generation' of national qualifications in Scotland. We stand ready to support the Scottish Government in contributing to what is a crucially important yet exciting strategic development for our country. Success in implementing *Curriculum for Excellence* will allow Scotland to become the first comprehensive learning system in Europe.
- 3.2 The College is content (as intimated in our Respondent Information return) to have this response placed in the public domain.
- 3.3 For further information or to discuss this response please contact Graeme Hyslop, Principal

Consultation Questions

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.


Question 1

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:

<p>(i) We would expect the college sector to be fully involved in the update process;</p> <p>(ii) the process should be implemented incrementally in order that instability in course/programme delivery is not created; and</p> <p>(iii) ongoing CPD in integrating literacy, numeracy and other essential skills will be necessary throughout the update process.</p>	
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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.)


Question 2

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:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the general principle of providing good quality feedback (presently a key aspect of unitised curricula - and overall college provision); and (ii) the flexibility which pertains in unitised curricula and assists schools and colleges to meet the diversity of young people's and adult learners' needs. This is especially important for more choices, more chances students. (iii) sound basis for progression (to Higher) |  |
|--|---|


Question 3

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:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) It is more important to establish the credibility of the new qualification and this will be achieved if the implementation process is not complex; and (ii) the new qualification must not be compromised by those students for whom it may be appropriate to commence their highers programme in Year 4. Such students should overtake the new general qualification. The 'norm', however, should be for every S4 school student to overtake a hybrid style learning/teaching. |  |
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


Question 4

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

Yes

No

Explanation:




<p>(i) Graded units are not necessary in the early stages of change; and</p> <p>(ii) consideration of graded units might be given in, say, five years.</p>	
	

Question 5

Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support?

- 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 :




<p>Option B represents the simplest and most inclusive way forward. Good feedback and school/college testimonial that includes wider achievement will serve to inform employers, parents (and general public) and receiving institutions.</p>	
	

Question 6

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 :

<p>(i) The differentiation is confusing and divisory; and</p> <p>(ii) we would recommend "Scottish General Qualification" (SCQF level 4 and SCQF level 5).</p>	
	

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.




Question 7

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:

<p>Recognition by accreditation is the most appropriate way to determine capability and also allows success of CfE to be measured. Employers express concern about lack of Literacy and Numeracy. Accreditation gives simple transparent measure to them.</p> <p>Adult learners would also welcome accreditation (FE experience) as this allows them to gain accreditation separately (given likelihood that they may not have taken full school curriculum).</p>	
	

Question 8

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:

- (i) A strong unitised approach (with personal reporting and good feedback) provides sufficient flexible and inclusive delivery and options to recognise achievement; and
- (ii) given that all subjects in the school curriculum will feature "embedded" literacy and numeracy the Scottish Certificate in literacy and numeracy may be overtaken by exploring the specific and proven abilities of students particularly at S4.

Question 9

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.

- Option A - Equal weight.
- Option B - More weight to internal assessment.
- Option C - More weight to external assessment.

Explanation:

- (i) The experience of weighting towards internal assessment has worked very well for many years in the college sector;
- (ii) the overall "embedding" of literacy and numeracy throughout the school curriculum will allow the evidence gathering process to be school based and the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment should be managed best at the level of the institution;
- (iii) more appropriate vehicle for confidence building in pupils and adults; and
- (iv) faster feedback for adults who wish to progress to next stage where there are more (decisions and) choices than for school pupils.

Question 10

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

Please select 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:

We would wish to tick options A, B and C as they are both not mutually exclusive and may well be achievable together.

- (i) All three the assessment process should be closely aligned with teaching and learning; and
- (ii) it should be an ongoing process with various opportunities to achieve without the need for specific time which can hold up adult in their path to progress.

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.

Question 11

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:

- (i) We would support 'maximum flexibility' in what is offered; but
- (ii) we do not support "bypassing" of "lower level qualifications" for the reasons stated above.

Question 12

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

Yes

No

Explanation:

Those subjects which have been prioritised for development with the Curriculum for Excellence implementation programme. (Science, Numeracy, Maths, Modern Languages, Classical Languages and Gaelic).

Question 13

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

Suggestions:

Question 14

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:









As intimated above, the "embedding" of literacy and numeracy and if the most flexible approach to assessment and certification is adopted the identification of ability clusters, is likely to be divisive and should not be necessary.

As suggested in our response to Question 3 all students should overtake general qualification.

Question 15

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

Suggestions:

<p>(i) A 'partnership' approach to senior phase provision in which colleges are seen as equal partners who can broaden and deepen range of subjects available; and</p> <p>(ii) specific pilots (for example with respect to the new baccalaureates) in which school/college delivery partnerships are encouraged.</p>	       
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TIMELINE**Question 16**

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:

<p>(i) The timeline is very challenging; yet</p> <p>(ii) a full funded implementation plan - with full participation by colleges is necessary.</p>	       
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ANY OTHER COMMENTS

<p>See introductory comments - set out in separate document.</p>	       
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[Submit Responses](#)

Comments

The College takes the view that the consultation exercise is rather restricted and restrictive. The questions are narrow and a range of important issues that should be part of the consultation are not. These include:

- a missed opportunity to consider alternative approaches to measure achievement (including 'distance travelled', professional testimonials, recognition of experience);
 - a much higher profile for SCQF; and
 - a more radical approach than grading - which we regard as very traditional - such as points systems, confidence statements and testimonials. Such an approach would be reinforcing of and reinforced by a unique learner number for every Scottish learner (A truly comprehensive learning system would, therefore, be possible).
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