

Consultation Questions

PROPOSAL 1

National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability. Higher, 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

I do not feel Access 3 is a "gold standard" course in English, therefore a chance to improve it would be welcomed. English Standard Grade Foundation is a more accessible course than Access 3 for our low ability pupils - this has been tried and tested.

If "update" for Higher is focused on unit rewards (questioned later) then I welcome that. However, I feel that I do not understand the full intentions behind update, so feel wary to give full support to this. With such a major structural and curricular change proposed at all levels of secondary education I have grave concerns. In the past, one level would be changed at a time and only following considerable preparation and support. No support is available in Aberdeen City. Update equals change and that requires resources. Also update negate "gold standard" courses being regarded as a point of stability.

Proposal 2

A new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and (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 qualification 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

An English folio element (from Standard Grade) is important because under the conditions of Intermediate, a pupil could technically have only completed one piece of writing to pass half of the language unit. If a pupil has gone Standard Grade in S3/4 and then moved on to Int 2 /Higher, they have at least experienced creating many types of writing.

We would wish to keep Foundation English instead of Access 3. Textual Analysis and Personal Study Units too demanding. Keep Int 2 as good preparation for 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:

It is quite disheartening for a pupil when they have put an immense amount of effort into a piece of work and then get the same result as the person who did just enough. Pass / fail develops an attitude of pupils just having to meet minimum standards. It is motivating and rewarding to receive a grade that reflects the level of effort pupils put in.

Question 4

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

Yes

No

If units remain at Pass / Fail, units should count towards final award, however if units are graded this will lead to constant redrafting to upgrade work before entering exam - workload issues and pressures on pupils.

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:

This option deals with reality, not what pupils might have done if they had taken another course. The extended grade option is pointless. It is ridiculous to think that an employer or body of education is going to care about grade E - they haven't just failed, they've really, really failed.

We disagree with any compensatory awards because it encourages pupils to study at level beyond ability, knowing that if failed still get an award.

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

The names are too close to Standard Grade General level - implying "average" rather than broad. It would take a long time for pupils and more significantly employers to forget what General used to mean.

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:

If pass at level 3 is it not sufficient to indicate a state of literacy? That should be enough. All depends on content of literacy assessment which we are currently unaware of.

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:

Otherwise the English and Maths departments will end up with this responsibility dumped on them - the most overstretched departments in schools as it is.

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:

We would have thought that employers would want to know how independently literate / numerate with an internal assessment.

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:

Formal exams require a certain level of maturity and the pupils who will need the literacy result most (because they may not be taking whatever the subject of English is offering) i.e. the low ability pupils, often take until this stage to be mature enough to cope.

However, if pupils have not been in English department for a year (if permitted to drop it at end of S3) who is practically responsible for supporting them in taking their exam.

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 Higher's from S4 onwards.

Question 11

Question 13

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

Suggestions:

Why not do Int. 2 in one year and then Higher in one year as at present, for those who need that preparation time for Higher.

Question 12

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

Yes

No

Explanation:

My fear is that I am always preparing pupils for exams. In English a huge amount of marking is generated during exam preparation. It can just about be endured because it only happens twice a year (prelims and real exams). If I had 2 or 3 classes and some were sitting a winter diet and some a summer diet, I would always be preparing someone for prelims or real exams and I could not cope with that marking burden on top of what we do day to day.

If pupils sit exam in December, assume they've passed, then find out they've failed, there's a mad dash to pass in May.

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:

I cannot commit to this without knowing what sort of preparation they would be getting for Higher, if they have skipped a level. It doesn't matter how able they are, if they haven't been taught certain things we could be setting pupils up to fail. English requires a degree of maturity.

How would appeals work?

There may be parental pressure to do this, rather than pupil choice.

Question 15

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

Suggestions:

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:

This is a massive change! New courses, New qualifications, New curriculum, New teaching model. If all teachers were relieved from normal duty to devote themselves to this ambitious revision of all aspects of the curriculum then we could follow this timeline. However, as this of course will not be happening, it is clear that far too much is being expected of teachers. We are being asked to comment on and plan for a system when we don't even know the details of all the elements - SCQF 4 & 5 ?! In Aberdeen City there are no seconded teachers to work together on implementing CfE (or money / support). We are all working in isolation, therefore ineffectively. Extensive courses so we can familiarise ourselves with the changes and build our confidence in the delivery of the change are required. Teachers have limited "extra time" so a more sympathetic timeline is required - you are not simply updating your computer software: we are human beings and it must be appreciated that we do a demanding job as it is. We don't get to just stop everything else so we can focus on this. Until we know what the assessment is it will be difficult to plan course content because although assessment does not dictate course content, it does influence it.