

A Consultation on the Next Generation of National Qualifications in Scotland

Response submitted by: Clyde Valley High School Senior Management Team

Proposal 1:

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

YES

Comment:

- All courses should be reviewed on the basis of full staff consultation.
- The review must ensure that content is the same at all levels to allow for dual level teaching.
- All subjects must be offering the same levels of courses and avoid the situation where discreet sciences were not offered at standard grade foundation level.
- There needs to be progression in all courses

Proposal 2:

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:

- Welcome the inclusive nature of standard grade and the unitised structure of intermediate qualifications.
- The new system should seek to avoid the number of exam papers students have to sit at standard grade.

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

YES

Explanation:

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

NO

Explanation:

- We need to reduce the time taken by the assessment process at the end of each unit.
- If the units do not count towards the final exam there is less pressure to resit them.
- Graded units could be used for the appeal system.

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 **X**

Explanation / other suggestion:

Option E is chosen on the understanding that the suggestions for questions 1 – 4 are followed.

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.

NO

Explanation / other suggestion

- We believe that the use of the word 'general' could be confusing as BC3 talks of the 'general' education to be provided for all in S1 – S3. The use of 'general' in the qualifications beyond S3 is an unnecessary confusion.
- We believe that there is merit in maintaining the names Intermediate 1 & 2

Proposal 3

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

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

Explanation:

- As these are cross curricular courses we need a national exam.

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

More weight to external assessment

Explanation:

- There has to be more weight to the external exam to give the award credibility

Q 10: 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

Explanation:

- This will provide motivation for pupils in S3.

Proposal 4

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:

- We support the proposal to provide courses over 12 months and 24 months but **not** 18 months this is in line with our response to Q12.

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

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

Explanation:

- Need for fallback facility for compensatory awards at level A of the level below.

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

Suggestions:

- None – Proposals allow for sufficient flexibility.

TIMELINE

Q16: It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/2009, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from the school year 2009/2010. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/2013 onwards to ensure smooth progression between curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment upon implications to be considered.

NO

Comment:

- The timeline is unrealistic. There should be an extension of one year for planning.

A Consultation on the Next Generation of National Qualifications in Scotland

Response submitted by: Performing Arts Faculty

Proposal 1:

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

YES

Comment:

It makes sense to update the qualifications as we embark upon the new 3-18 curriculum. Concerns as to when the new qualifications will be updated. Teachers are beginning to plan new materials, units of work etc this year without knowing what the examination system requires.

Proposal 2:

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:

A sensible weighting / percentage of different elements which pupils understand.

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:

Staff were undecided on this point. Units vary so much between subjects with varying amounts of time spent on pass/fail units. For example, in Drama, pupils will spend the first 6 weeks working on their Investigative Drama unit which the majority pass. However, in Music, pupils work until Easter on their Composing folio which takes up a huge deal of their own and staff time. Pupils are often only able to do enough to pass due to time constraints and often, pupils will be unable to sit the full course due to the enormity of the unit work. If units were to be more consistent between subjects, then yes, pupils should be given credit for their work. Stand alone units could be left as pass / fail as many pupils sit these to fulfil their time and pursue a subject / unit they enjoy.

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

NO

Explanation:

If the units stay as they are, there is far too much pressure on pupils just to do enough work to pass and no more. If these were to be graded, pupils marks would suffer in many subjects. This would be a return to previous qualifications where there was no pass/fail unit. If units were to be updated and changed then views may change. Maybe a separate unit award with grade on certificate which does not count towards final award.

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:

Option B:

Pupils are still given recognition for individual units studied without compensatory awards or lower levels. Compensatory awards should not be given out as this demeans the awards system. Extending the range of grades to level E would not change views and opinions of the work done by that pupil. Outside agencies will still look for a Grade A-C and still deem a D or E grade as a fail. Individual unit work would not be recognised here.

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

Advanced General sounds like a contradiction of terms.

Proposal 3

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

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

Explanation:

Although it is a lower level, staff feel it is important for pupils to sit an examination and have that experience. Course Awards should not be given without some percentage of examination, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Issues of plagiarism and cheating would also have to be considered.

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

More weight to external assessment or Equal weighting

Explanation:

Importance on external exams and the Scottish Examination System should remain. Pupils receiving awards without sitting an exam would demean the system. Some level of internal assessment should remain but the ultimate goal is performance in the examination.

Q 10: 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

Explanation:

If pupils are ready, S3 would provide an ideal opportunity. As they don't sit any other exams in S3 currently, this would provide time for preparation for an external examination. If pupils were not ready or failed to pass the course, they could resit the following year with other subjects.

Proposal 4

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

Explanation:

12 months and 2 years are ideal time frames. 18 months would throw up too many issues and concerns including:

Timetabling – would all 3 groups of pupils be in the same class as well as current bi and sometimes tri-level teaching? This could not work as teachers would be expected to teach up to 6 different groups at the same time.

SQA Visiting Examining – SQA are currently struggling to recruit visiting examiners for the summer diet without adding in a winter diet.

Prelims and NABs would have to be sat at varying times throughout the year.

Teachers would concentrate on the pupils with exams coming up whilst other groups would be left without assistance.

If pupils sit an exam in the winter. What do they do for the next 6 months? Start a new subject / course? Not viable.

Staff are very opposed to 18 month diet.

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

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:

NO

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

Explanation:

In theory, this sounds like a good idea but some concerns were raised:

It is a big risk. If pupils fail the Higher, there is nothing to fall back on. Many teachers, parents and pupils would not want to take that risk.

Bi and tri-level teaching in S4. In your current Standard Grade class, you would be working towards standard grades (or new equivalent) at 3 levels whilst trying to teach Higher at the same time. 4-levels within the one class!

A lot of time constraints on teaching Higher in 3 periods per week. Pupils would suffer.

More stress on teachers.

What do these pupils do in S5?

Teachers may introduce Higher work in S4 but would still encourage pupils to sit General / Advanced General exams as a back-up to reduce the risk.

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

Suggestions:

TIMELINE

Q16: It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/2009, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from the school year 2009/2010. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/2013 onwards to ensure smooth progression between curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment upon implications to be considered.

YES / NO

Comment:

The time frame is realistic but it is difficult to plan a new structure / courses for next year when the structure and content of new examinations is unknown.

New qualifications / examinations must be planned and made known to staff well in advance to we can plan courses further down the line.

A Consultation on the Next Generation of National Qualifications in Scotland

Response submitted by: English

Proposal 1:

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

YES / NO

Comment: This proposal is too vague. Unless we have some idea of what areas are going to be "updated" it is difficult to comment on whether this would be a positive move. None of the English department could work out how the current qualifications were incompatible with ACfE, as the question suggests. Surely ACfE is a philosophy about how you facilitate the teaching and learning of whatever qualifications you are delivering?

Proposal 2:

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: The folio is a positive part of S Grade and the removal of the folio from Higher Still was a mistake in our view. The folio gives a purpose and structure to the day-to-day work of English classes and any attempt to remove it from the new qualification would be wrong. Oral communication is also an important element of English and provides focus on a practical skill for life. We would advocate a change in the weighting of the final grade to give more emphasis to the exam and less to internally graded elements (i.e. Talk). While the unit based structure is useful in most subjects, it has always been an uneasy fit in English. Our subject is skills based and the S Grade model of assessment in Reading, Writing and Talking is more useful.

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

YES / NO / Maybe

Explanation: Only if it contributes to the final grade. If the grading is done by class teachers then strict moderation is essential.

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

YES / NO

Explanation: See above.

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: **If the levels of the new courses are properly set then logically a near miss at the higher level should mean the pupil's capabilities are best reflected by the top grade at the lower level.**

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 **No-one liked the name 'Advanced General'. Why not just 'Advanced', or indeed 'Credit'?**

Proposal 3

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

We are against the whole idea of this award. What will a Literacy exam look like? What is a reliable measure of literacy? We can all imagine that Numeracy will be like the old Arithmetic O Grade, but Literacy is much more complex. If it's about a combination of technical skills like grammar, punctuation and spelling, alongside a test of your ability to read with comprehension, then how does that differ from current English exams? There is no need for this qualification if there is a General and Advanced General English course alongside it. Any pupil who gains an Advanced General grade has demonstrably better literacy skills than a pupil with a General grade. The alternative is to accept that the current English set up already gives a measure of literacy and there is no need for a further exam.

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: **Access 3 has no exam for a reason – pupils of that ability level do not perform well in exam situations and are disadvantaged by them. Why should that change if it is still aimed at the same group of pupils?**

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: **Not applicable given our answer to Q.7**

Q 10: 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: **Not applicable.**

Proposal 4

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: **If the question asked ' over 12 months and 2 years' our answer would have been yes. There is no need for a winter diet in schools.**

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/ Maybe

Explanation: **Only if there is a clearly defined system of safety nets for those who bypass Advanced General and then fail Higher.**

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

Suggestions:

TIMELINE

Q16: It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/2009, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from the school year 2009/2010. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/2013 onwards to ensure smooth progression between curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment upon implications to be considered.

YES / NO

Comment: **A ridiculously ambitious timescale. No-one has any idea yet what courses will look like under 'A Curriculum For Excellence'. At the moment it remains a set of admirable but vague concepts. Until these ideas are properly fleshed out and subjects are given some guidance about what they should be doing to adapt their courses, then how can we plan effectively? It is imperative that there is some uniformity of approach and at the moment there does not seem to be. There is a growing resentment among many English teachers that S Grade is being scrapped for no good reason and that**

courses with deeply flawed structures are being kept instead. None of us feel that the removal of the externally assessed folio at Higher/ Int 2/ and Int 1 was a positive move and we are deeply suspicious that it will now be removed at the S Grade equivalent level as a cost-cutting exercise. No-one in this department is against change if it improves on what we already have. At the moment, these proposals are either too vague to properly comment, or they fail to address some of the issues we feel there are with the current system.

A Consultation on the Next Generation of National Qualifications in Scotland

Response submitted by: Clyde Valley High School Senior Pupil Council

Proposal 1:

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

YES

In particular, the Pupil Council strongly felt that all courses at any one level had to be a sound preparation for study at the next level of course. Members felt that, at present, in some subjects the study of some courses did not provide such preparation. They also felt that it was important that, during the course of study, pupils could move from one level to the next, if the level they were achieving indicated a switch of level would be beneficial.

Comment:

Proposal 2:

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:

Council members all felt that within Standard Grade courses, S3 was insufficiently demanding. It was far too easy a year when there was no urgency to work hard. Therefore, they would welcome having to sit end of unit assessments – NABS. These encouraged pupils to work hard throughout the course. However, they all felt that NABS had to be made more demanding. Currently they were much easier than the summative examination. They needed to reflect the standard of that final examination.

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

YES

Explanation:

As above, there was a need to let pupils know how well they were coping with the demands of the course they were sitting. Graded NABS would give that information. They would help motivate pupils to continue to work hard or to work hard to achieve the next level of award.

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

YES

Explanation:

All members felt that there should be recognition for work done throughout the course. They felt that many Standard Grade subjects rewarded effort and it was a positive feature that students could face the summative examination in the knowledge that they had already earned some credit.

Members were split, however, in the weighting that should exist between external and internal. Some felt that English Standard Grade had the balance right at 60:40. Others felt that gave pupils too great a comfort zone and reduced the need to work hard till the end of their course. These pupils favoured a ratio of 30:70. That ratio would recognise achievement gained throughout the course but the emphasis on the external examination would encourage pupils to work hard to the end of the course.

Pupils should be allowed to fail one of the three unit assessments and still be allowed to sit the external examination.

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 **Unanimous**

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:

Pupils were quite clear that a statement of Unit achievements was the most attractive option. They felt that would allow users, like universities and employers see most clearly the level of performance of which they were capable.

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.

NO

Explanation / other suggestion

Pupils felt it would be far too confusing to retain the term 'General' in a revised set of qualifications. Employers and other adults would be totally confused, especially for the first few years after implementation. Students might also struggle to understand the difference between these and the previous 'General Awards'.

All members liked the proposal to use the term 'Advanced' for the more demanding of the two qualifications. They felt this would sit well with 'Higher' and 'Advanced Higher'.

Proposal 3

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

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

Explanation: **All pupils should be treated the same.**

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:

Equal weighting for these courses would be fair as they covered all subjects.

Q 10: 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:

Pupils felt that having to sit these examinations at the end of S3 would provide strong motivation to work hard in S1-S3. They also saw sense in sitting these examinations at the end of what had been described to them as the end of the junior phase of study under 'A Curriculum for Excellence'.

Pupils strongly opposed any suggestion that these qualifications might be assessed at the end of S4. They felt that would lead to far too many examinations at that stage. They already that Standard Grade courses demanded they sit far too many examinations. They would welcome only have to sit one examination for every subject rather than the two papers currently required by Standard Grade.

Proposal 4

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

NO

Explanation:

Courses should be available over only 12 months or 24 months. Pupils did not like the idea of switching between courses halfway through a year. They felt that would be totally confusing for pupils. They liked choosing courses for a full session of study. They welcomed that some subjects could be studied over two years to give them more time to master the course requirements.

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

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?

None.

Suggestions:

Pupils felt that having examinations running during the winter would mean that in schools there would almost always be some form of examination running – either NABS or preliminary examinations or the examinations proper. They also could not see how schools could run them with accommodation often being limited.

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

NO

Explanation:

Pupils prefer to achieve one level of qualification and then progress to the next.

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

Suggestions:

There needs to be a complete review of the SCQF points tariff for all units and course. Pupils perceive that currently there is significant unfairness in the currently defined equivalences.

TIMELINE

Q16: It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/2009, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from the school year 2009/2010. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/2013 onwards to ensure smooth progression between curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment upon implications to be considered.

Don't Know – but as soon as possible to sort out the problems in the current system.

Comment:

Pupils felt the new system had to start running as quickly as possible but felt everyone had to understand it. They felt teachers were best placed to say when it should be introduced.