

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

Glasgow, 27 October 2009

**Response to the Scottish Government consultation on the next generation of national qualifications in Scotland**

Attached, please find the University of Strathclyde's response to the consultation on the next generation of national qualifications in Scotland. The response has been prepared by Deputy Principal Anne Hughes on behalf of the University.

With best regards,



Saskia Loer Hansen  
Head of Governance, Management and Policy

**The Scottish Government consultation on  
the next generation of national qualifications in Scotland**

**Response from the University of Strathclyde**

**20 October 08**

**Proposal 1** - Content of National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher to be updated.

**Response**

The University welcomes the intention to update all qualifications in line with CfE. However there also needs to be consultation with HE to ensure curricular continuity particularly of post S3 qualifications with degree entry requirements.

**Proposal 2** - A new qualification will replace Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 qualifications. The new qualifications will be available in a wide range of subjects.

**Response**

Those features of particular subjects at Standard Grade which are valued by teachers but do not figure in Intermediate awards (such as the assessment of talking in English) should be retained for the replacement levels. Likewise the more current and relevant content and approaches introduced in many subjects for intermediates should be retained as should some element of continuous assessment.

**Proposal 3** - New awards in literacy and numeracy.

**Response**

In general the university believes that literacy and numeracy are embedded across the curriculum and a more appropriate way to assess specific applications of literacy and numeracy within subjects would be to add appropriate and contextualised assessment criteria to all subjects

If these new qualifications are introduced then SCQF Numeracy as an alternative to Standard Grade or Intermediate 2 Mathematics (if it is more akin to Arithmetic than Mathematics) might be a more appropriate preparation for University courses which do not require more than a minimum standard in this subject area.

The views of professional bodies responsible for regulating admission to vocational courses should be sought to ensure that any new qualifications meet their standards. Two areas of particular concern to the University of Strathclyde are Primary Education and Social Work.

**Proposal 4** - The study of Highers and Advanced Highers, over a period of 1 year, 18 months or 2 years; introducing a winter diet of examinations; and encouraging the most able pupils to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4.

**Response**

The University of Strathclyde is aware that since the Scottish Executive's relaxation of Age and Stage regulations many schools have embarked on programmes of curricular flexibility, allowing pupils to take Highers at earlier stages. With regard to this development, the University of Strathclyde's policy is that if only one Higher has been taken earlier than S5, our normal S5 entry standard will apply. Where more than one Higher has been taken at an early stage we will generally require the S6 entry standard by the end of S5. Our Prospectus makes these two entry standards clear for every course.

We recognise that it will be more able pupils who take two or more Highers earlier than S5 and we are keen to encourage these pupils to fulfil their potential. Strong grades gained at Higher in S4 will be favourably regarded by our Academic Recruiters. However, we still believe that S5 should be a challenging year which helps prepare our future students for the academic demands of university life. Reducing the entry grades by two Highers would not, we believe, achieve this. We feel that the S6 entry requirements should be well within the capability of pupils who take two or more Highers before S5.

We know that some schools are opting to offer Standard Grade or equivalent exams in S3. Pupils who then take Highers in S5 will have had two years to study towards these. This will not affect our entry requirements - for these pupils our normal S5 entry standard will apply.

As the relaxation of Age and Stage regulations increasingly takes effect we are aware that we may receive applications from candidates offering a wider range of qualifications gained over a variety of timescales. We know that schools aim to act in the best interests of every pupil. Ultimately we consider our applicants as individuals and we are committed to giving their academic achievement the fullest possible recognition.

Our Widening Access Co-ordinator raised a concern that schools, where few go on to Higher Education, will struggle to resource the level of individualisation as suggested in the proposal. Additionally, small rural schools are also likely to struggle to offer the range of subjects and flexible timetabling to accommodate the flexibility sought in this new framework

#### **Additional Comment**

The proposed **Scottish Baccalaureates in Science and Languages** aimed at enhancing progression opportunities in related disciplines to Further and Higher Education and to employment are not included in this consultation. However, further consultation is required with Higher Education about how these new awards will be regarded in terms of entry to Higher Education and whether there will in fact be enhanced entry opportunities. Additionally there is scope for partnerships to be developed between Higher Education, secondary schools and business and industry in relation to the project dimension of the Baccalaureates.