

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	26 September 2023
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ♦ provide an update on the national Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland following the publication in June 2023 of the report “It’s Our Future”.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s): -

- (1) that the content of the report be noted.

3. Background

3.1. An Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment was announced by The Scottish Government in October 2021. The Review was initiated in response to:-

- ♦ recommendations in the OECD’s Independent Review of Scotland’s school curriculum (2021)
- ♦ the COVID-19 pandemic and a renewed debate around assessment following the cancellation of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams in 2020 and 2021
- ♦ Professor Gordon Stobart’s OECD paper setting out possible options for Scotland’s future approach to assessment and qualifications (2021)
- ♦ Professor Ken Muir’s report (2022) – Putting Learners at the Centre

Professor Louise Hayward was appointed to lead the Review and began work in Spring 2022

3.2. The aim of the Independent Review was to ensure that all Senior Phase learners have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the width, depth, and relevance of their learning. The Review was concerned with Senior Phase qualifications in schools, colleges and wider educational settings. The focus was predominately learners aged 15-18 in all educational settings, but the Review also considered possible implications for home educated learners and for adult learners who study courses that fall within the Review’s remit.

4. Review Process and Recommendations

- 4.1. Professor Hayward developed an innovative model of engagement, designed to seek views on key issues from a wide range of participants including learners and teachers.
- 4.2. An Independent Review Group (IRG) was established including a range of participants with an interest in qualifications (learners and, as appropriate, parents/carers, those who design, develop and offer qualifications, from classroom teachers to national bodies, and those who use qualifications, colleges, employers and universities). To extend and deepen the range of those involved each IRG member led a Collaborative Community Groups (CCG).
- 4.3. The consultation and engagement process took place in 3 phases:
 - to establish the vision and principles that should underpin the new approach
 - to consider the options for change
 - to present a high-level model for consideration
- 4.4. Professor Hayward's final report was published on 22 June 2023.

[It's Our Future: Report of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

- 4.5. Recommendations in the final report focus on the introduction of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA) with three elements:
 - ◆ Personal Pathway
 - ◆ Programmes of Learning
 - ◆ Project Learning
- 4.6. The Review recommends:
 - ◆ all learners should be offered the chance to experience learning in all elements of the Diploma and that these should be entitlements
 - ◆ the Diploma should be the graduation certificate offered in all settings where Senior Phase education is provided
 - ◆ there should be a digital profile for all learners which allows them to record personal achievements, identify and plan future learning
 - ◆ in a bid to strengthen parity of esteem between different types of qualifications there should be a move to use the terms 'SCQF level' as the key descriptor followed by type of qualification. E.g. SCQF Level 6 – Higher
 - ◆ the information on learners' achievements within the SDA, courses and projects should be aligned in Scottish Statistics on Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations and INSIGHT data
- 4.7. There are also a number of recommendations on the change process and what has to happen if the Scottish Diploma of Achievement is to be developed successfully.

5. Scottish Diploma of Achievement

5.1 Programmes of Learning

The final report states that learners would continue to study in-depth individual areas of the curriculum, general subjects and vocational, technical and professional qualifications. These would remain a fundamental part of qualifications. Where currently qualifications are graded, e.g., Highers, Advanced Highers, they would

continue to be graded. Courses would be designed in modules. As learners complete modules, they would build credit. Where a qualification has an examination, the credit learners have built through the course would be combined with result from the final examination to obtain the final grade. This would reduce the risk for learners of performing only a single day event. A wider range of methods of assessment would be used and methods would be appropriate to the individual programme. The number of examinations in the Senior Phase would be reduced.

5.2. Personal Pathways

The central focus of the Personal Pathway is reflection on learning, whether that be learning in school, in college or in the community. The purpose of the Personal Pathway is to give learners the opportunity to personalise their qualification profile by selecting aspects of their experiences that reflect their interests, the contributions they make to society and their career aspirations in employment and to discuss these in a reflective way. The focus of the Personal Pathway is not on the number of experiences but on what an individual has learnt through an experience. The Personal Pathway would not be graded but would be subject to authentication processes. The Personal Pathway would be owned by the learner.

5.3. Project Learning

In Project Learning, learners would have the opportunity to use the knowledge and skills they have developed in their Programmes of Learning to tackle a significant question or problem that is important to them by undertaking a Project. For some learners, the focus could be on a global challenge, for example, climate change, migration or social justice. Projects may be undertaken individually or in groups, but assessment would be individual. Project Learning would not be graded but will be linked to SCQF levels each with a different number of credit points.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The Scottish Government is considering the report and recommendations and will respond in due course.
- 6.2. Local Authorities continue to consider the implications of the report, noting that the timeline for change has yet to be agreed.
- 6.3. The principles are welcome in that the SDA allows a broader range of a young person's achievements and attributes to be recognised and valued, and the intent is to reduce the assessment burden on young people.
- 6.4. Education Resources will continue to engage with the process and plan for change in line with the national approach.
- 6.5. In the meantime, schools will be supported to consider and develop:-
 - ◆ the range of programmes offered to young people
 - ◆ approaches to assessment and moderation
 - ◆ the ways in which we support individual personal achievement
 - ◆ a focus on skills for learning and work, including project-based learning

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. None

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. None

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no significant implications for climate change, sustainability and the environment arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. There are no implications for risk in terms of the information contained in this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 10.2. The engagement process with stakeholders undertaken by the Independent Review Group is highlighted in paragraph 4 of this report.

Carole McKenzie

Executive Director (Education Resources)

6 September 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities /Outcomes

- ◆ Education and learning: Inspiring learners, transforming learners and strengthening partnerships

Previous References

- ◆ Education Resources Committee, September 2022: Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Scotland – School Participation

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- ◆ OECD Report – review of the curriculum

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: - Stewart Nicolson, Head of Education

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