

Sue Webber MSP
Convener: Education, Children and Young
People Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

21 October 2022

Dear Ms Webber,

Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

I write to you today to provide an update on the progress of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment.

As I stated at our previous meeting, the Independent Review Group (IRG) is undertaking an extensive and inclusive programme of engagement. I am pleased to inform you that this process is proceeding as planned.

The Review has now completed phase one to establish the Vision and Principles for the future of Qualifications and Assessment. Work is now progressing into the second phase, where we will explore parameters for the *Options for Change*.

Phase two of the Review will repeat the successful cycle of engagement adopted for Phase one. Phase two will, however, see the addition of a programme of school and college visits, which will offer me the opportunity to hear directly from a wide range of learners and their educators. Alongside this, we will launch a Public Consultation, which will run from Friday 21 October until Friday 16 December.

I will continue to update the Committee on the work of the Review, and if you find it appropriate, I would welcome another opportunity to meet with you and the Deputy Convener in the coming weeks. If you would be willing to meet with me, please contact my secretariat team – they will be more than happy to arrange the discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Louise Hayward
Convener: Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CONVENER OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Introduction

1. This document sets out the remit for the Qualifications and Assessment Independent Review Group (IRG), which will be led by Emerita Professor of Educational Assessment and Innovation at the University of Glasgow Louise Hayward (the IRG Convener).

Background

2. This work stems in part, from the recent OECD reports into Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence - Into the Future* (2021) found that whilst CfE "*continues to be a bold and widely supported initiative, and its design offers the flexibility needed to improve student learning further...the structure, learning practices and assessment approaches in the Senior Phase also need adapting to be consistent with CfE's vision, and to allow for the smooth curriculum experience promised from 3 to 18.*" The subsequent report by Professor Gordon Stobart, *Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective* (2021) sought to provide insight into the perceived 'misalignment' between curriculum and assessment and to highlight opportunities for reform of assessments in the Senior Phase.
3. In addition to these recent OECD reports, following the cancellation, due to COVID-19, of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher exams in 2020 and 2021 there has been a renewed public debate in Scotland about assessment, particularly in the Senior Phase. Thus, in October 2021 the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced that Professor Louise Hayward of Glasgow University would lead work, consulting on the purpose and principles which should underpin any reform of national qualifications and assessment.
4. This work will take as its starting point, a consideration and analysis of the OECD reports; prior engagement, research and the numerous consultation responses received as part of Professor Ken Muir's work which relate to qualifications and assessment specifically; early engagement by Professor Hayward with colleagues from the Scottish Youth Parliament and Children's Parliament and relevant prior research and surveys of students, teachers and parents & carers on this subject.

Scope

5. The Convener supported by the IRG and Collaborative Community Groups will provide a report and recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, advising on the purpose and principles which should underpin any reform of national qualifications and assessment in the 'Senior Phase'. This will predominately cover S4-6 in school and ages 15-18 out with school, however it is also recognised that there may be implications for some adult learners who study

courses which fall within the remit. The focus of this work will be school and college qualifications accessible in the Senior Phase. The review will not consider or make recommendations on the content of individual courses.

6. It is anticipated that the IRG will explore issues such as:
 - The purposes, uses and relevance of a qualification/awards/exams system, including recognition of learning, accreditation, selection and accountability;
 - The perceived misalignment between curriculum and assessment;
 - Consider the approaches to assessment in vocational and technical subjects and lessons that could be learned from these approaches;
 - Fairness, equity and the impact of different approaches to assessment for qualifications;
 - From ideas to practice – the process of change and learning from our past
 - Wider National and International approaches to the future of assessment and qualifications.
7. The conclusions that the Convener and IRG reach will be made independently of the Scottish Government and all other institutions.
8. The Convener will invite membership to the IRG from individuals who come from a variety of backgrounds and who have a range of skills, expertise and knowledge.

Collaborative Community Groups

9. A key responsibility of IRG members will be to facilitate engagement. Each IRG member will bring together individuals from their community to form a Collaborative Community Group. IRG members will be expected to gather perspectives and views from individuals and groups which reflect the diverse make-up of all of Scotland's communities. They will also be expected to think creatively about how best to engage their respective communities and consequently the operation of individual Collaborative Community Groups is expected to vary. IRG members and Collaborative Community Groups will be supported by the Independent Secretariat within Scottish Government.
10. Evidence and insights gleaned from the Collaborative Community Groups will be brought back to the monthly IRG meetings and will form a fundamental and core part of the overall evidence gathered.

Membership of IRG and Collaborative Community Groups

11. Membership of the IRG and Collaborative Community Groups will ensure that all interested groups with a stake in the future of qualifications have the opportunity to feed into the review. Membership will include, but is not limited to:
 - Those most directly concerned (users, students, parents and carers) ensuring that there are individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds from all these groups;

- Those immediately responsible for delivering courses leading to qualifications – teachers, lecturers, school and college leaders and training providers including those representing the Gaelic Medium Education Sector;
- Those who use these qualifications as young people transition from higher education, further education, employers, and external agencies (e.g. Skills Development Scotland)';
- Those responsible for providing such qualifications: e.g., SQA, other awarding bodies and other regulatory bodies;
- Those responsible for local policy in relation to qualifications, e.g., local education authorities and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland';
- Researchers in fields essential to the work of the group, e.g., curriculum, qualifications and assessment, equality and social justice, accountability, national and international assessment systems, sustainable change.
- Representation from all parts of the country, in both urban and rural settings.

Activities

12. The Convener and IRG will undertake the following activities:

- Develop and then collectively agree through a process of co-design a set of overarching principles for assessment. These principles will guide and inform the review process itself;
- Establish Collaborative Community Groups that ensure all interested groups with a stake in the future of qualifications have the opportunity to feed into the review;
- Review relevant existing evidence and research;
- Commission national and international evidence to inform deliberations, as appropriate;
- Consider its work in the wider context of other relevant strategic reports including for example the work conducted by Professor Ken Muir into the replacement of SQA and the reform of Education Scotland and the recommendations of the Scottish Funding Council Review for the Tertiary Sector;
- Work in conjunction with the forthcoming National Discussion on education and ensure relevant findings from the Discussion are considered in preparing a final report;
- Consider and take cognisance of the history and development of qualifications and assessment in Scotland to date;
- Produce practical recommendations that are forward looking, have a broad consensus of support and are in alignment with the values of Scottish society;
- Provide advice on the implementation of future change and potential timeframes.

Outcomes and approach

13. The Independent Review Group will:

- demonstrate through its working practices a commitment to placing learners at the centre;
- work at all times in an open, transparent participative and inclusive way; and seek to embody and promote ways of working that reflect these principles;
- establish Collaborative Community Groups which operate in a non-hierarchical way and facilitate widespread and in-depth meaningful engagement with individuals and groups across Scotland, in particular with those most affected namely learners and parents and carers;
- seek to build consensus and agreement to a shared future vision;
- use a range of analytical approaches to generate evidence from policy, practice and research and from that draw evidence based conclusions;
- publish relevant material on the Scottish Government website in a timely manner.

14. The Convener will:

- work at all times in an open, transparent, participative and inclusive way; and seek to embody and promote ways of working that reflect these principles;
- convene a meeting of the IRG on a monthly basis;
- meet the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills regularly during the lifespan of the group to update her on progress;
- ensure IRG members are supported to fulfil their responsibilities as detailed above;
- provide the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills with an interim report and
- Produce a final report which is accessible and user friendly.

Timescales

15. The Convener will begin this work in Spring 2022 and it will conclude by the end of March 2023.

Action	Timing
First meeting of IRG	May
First meeting of IRG and Collaborative Community Groups	Early June
Engagement	May – January
Interim report	by end of December 2022
Final recommendations	by end of Spring 2023

Secretariat support

16. Secretariat support required by the Convener, the IRG and Collaborative Community Groups will be provided through the Education Reform Directorate in Scottish Government. The Secretariat will work independently of the Scottish Government in support of the Review.

Sponsor arrangements

17. The Curriculum and Qualifications Division in the Education Reform Directorate will be the Convener's sponsor Division within the Scottish Government. The named sponsor for this work will be the Deputy Director for Curriculum and Qualifications, Laura Murdoch.