

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE REVIEW 2020/21

This document sets out the framework for an independent review of Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, commissioned by the Scottish Government to be led by the OECD.

BACKGROUND

1. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) represented a significant reform to put in place a coherent 3-18 curriculum in Scotland. It places learners at the heart of education and at its centre are four fundamental capacities which reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. More than a decade has passed since the inception of CfE.
2. The Scottish Government commissioned the OECD to conduct an independent review during 2015 that was focused on the Broad General Education (BGE) in order to inform the ongoing development of education policy, practice and leadership in Scotland.
3. Maintaining a focus on continual improvement, in May 2019 the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills announced the commissioning of an independent review of the Senior Phase curriculum. The intended purpose of this was to better understand how the Senior Phase curriculum is being designed and implemented in schools and to identify areas for potential development to ensure that this phase of the curriculum contributes as effectively as possible to the education of young people in Scotland.
4. Plans for a review of the Senior Phase had been backed by the Scottish Parliament and key education stakeholders. However, in January 2020, the Scottish Parliament called for the review to be extended to cover all of CfE including the BGE, the Senior Phase and the articulation between them.
5. Adopting a broader perspective to the review of CfE, including the Senior Phase, will allow consideration of the CfE experience as a whole from a student learning perspective. It will also allow an evaluation of progress in implementing CfE at all levels in the system and an assessment of the effectiveness of the articulation between the BGE and Senior Phase. It will also provide an opportunity for us to look to the future and consider what we want Curriculum for Excellence to be over the next 10 years and beyond.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND AIMS OF THE REVIEW

6. Some key guiding principles will shape this work from the outset in terms of its focus and approach:
 - Young people's experience and learning should be the most important consideration throughout the review, and this should consider the experiences of all learners, including those with additional support needs.
 - The principles and aspirations of CfE have had widespread support from practitioners, learners, parents, and politicians in Scotland and, as such, are not being questioned in the review.

- The focus of the review is to understand how the policy aims are being implemented, in partnership across schools, colleges, community learning and development and employers in Scotland, for the benefit of learners.
- The review will be collaborative, involving Scottish education stakeholders (in particular through Scotland's Curriculum and Assessment Board) and practitioners throughout the process.

7. The overarching aims of the review are to:

- better understand how the curriculum is being implemented in schools, local authorities and delivery partners (looking at its design and implementation);
- identify what is working well and where progress is being made and, where possible, how progress might be strengthened and, or accelerated; and
- identify particular areas/issues that require to be focused on for development in order to ensure that the curriculum contributes as effectively as possible to the education of all young people in Scotland.

SCOPE

8. The review's consideration of the **Broad General Education (BGE)** curriculum will, as its starting point, assess progress in addressing the BGE curriculum related recommendations set out in the 2015 review.

9. The review's consideration of the **Senior Phase** curriculum will in particular consider key areas and challenges that have been identified by the Education and Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Education Council and the Curriculum and Assessment Board, including subject choice and multi-level teaching. The review will provide an independent perspective in order to assist in moving forward on key issues. These areas include:

- **Curriculum design** – considering how the curriculum is being designed locally and used flexibly to meet the needs of all learners. Consider how well the curriculum design principles are being used to support learning and achievement, including collaboration with colleges and other partners.
- **Local flexibility versus increased prescription** – assessing the equity of the offer for all young people through flexibility to meet local needs, as envisaged by CfE, or whether there is a case for developing a more detailed framework with scope for local flexibility. Identifying whether or not we need greater consistency in aspects of the delivery of the curriculum.
- **Depth and breadth of learning in the Senior Phase** – looking at the extent to which the changes to pedagogy anticipated with CfE have been achieved within the Senior Phase and considering how well practitioners have been supported in understanding the aims of CfE and the impact of different approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. This will include the impact of qualifications on pedagogy.
- **The transition from the BGE into Senior Phase** – considering how effectively S3 is being used as a transition year in preparing young people for the Senior Phase and the articulation between the BGE and Senior Phase.
- **Vocational and academic learning and awards** – assessing the extent to which parity of esteem is being achieved in relation the different learning pathways.

- **Roles and responsibilities** – looking at how, where and when key decisions are made and the role of national agencies in providing support and guidance in relation to the curriculum.
10. This set of key issues within the Senior Phase is not intended to be either prescriptive nor exhaustive. It represents some key issues within the Senior Phase that we are keen to draw to the review team’s attention as areas of focus.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

11. The Scottish Government has invited the OECD to lead an independent review, building on the previous review led in 2015. This offers a number of benefits and advantages as the OECD:
- can build on experience with country reviews and implementation support work;
 - has comparative data and targeted analysis on curriculum and its reform (Education 2030 project and Implementing Education Policies country work);
 - has engaged with Scotland in previous reviews: (OECD, 2007) Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland; ([OECD, 2015](#)) Improving Schools in Scotland: an OECD Perspective; and
 - can tailor its work for countries and education systems to support the development and implementation of concrete education policies through its programme [Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education](#).
12. The OECD’s Directorate of Education will use its [Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education](#) framework for the review. This approach is different from that used for the 2015 review. The OECD uses the framework to provide tailored support to individual countries and education systems to analyse and support the development and implementation of education policies. The review team will, therefore, consider CfE under the framework’s themes of:
- Smart policy design
 - Inclusive stakeholder engagement
 - Conducive context
 - A coherent implementation strategy
13. The review team will draw on relevant international and Scottish data and available evidence from education stakeholders and partners that will be provided to the OECD. OECD team will also conduct visits to Scotland and carry out consultation sessions and seminars to engage with young people, practitioners and key stakeholders.
14. It is important that current educational practitioners play a key role in the review process. In response to the request by OECD for a project advisory group to guide the work and discuss progress and deliverables, the Scottish Government will convene a Scottish Practitioner Forum.
15. Learner voice and participation will also be a significant feature of the review. Learner perspectives will be sought in collaboration with partner agencies and via appropriate methods.
16. A National Coordinator from the Scottish Government’s Learning Directorate will act as the main contact between OECD and Scotland. They will support the OECD’s engagement with the Scottish Practitioner Forum, learners and other key stakeholders.

17. The key roles and responsibilities of the OECD, the Scottish Practitioner Forum, national stakeholders and the National Co-ordinator are set out in **Annex A**.

DELIVERABLES AND TIMEFRAME

18. The key deliverables from the review will be:

- OECD engagement with Scottish Government and the Scottish Practitioner Forum, including strategic advice throughout the project.
- OECD led stakeholder consultation event(s) to gather input and feedback on the implementation of the CfE.
- An OECD education policy assessment report that consists of an analysis of the implementation of CfE in Scotland, provides feedback on progress to date in its implementation and offers recommendations for next steps. An example of this type of report can be found [here](#).

19. The review will run from February 2020, concluding with a report in February 2021 (published by OECD officially at a later date) and will involve at least one assessment visit, including one visit in Q2 2020, with further stakeholder engagement work in the Q2-3 following up on initial findings.

26 February 2020

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

OECD

The OECD will undertake the following tasks throughout the review:

- Bring together an OECD team of experts for the assessment.
- Provide the National Coordinator with a template on key information and documentation required by OECD for the preparation for the review.
- Undertake a desk-based study of relevant policy documents, studies and data.
- Exchange with the National Coordinator and with the Scottish Practitioner Forum on the content of the review through e-mail, video conferences and other relevant meetings.
- Visit Scotland to meet with relevant education stakeholders to understand strengths, challenges and possible recommendations for ways forward. This will be organised by the National Coordinator following OECD guidelines. The team will present the preliminary findings at the end of the visit.
- Draft a report to be provided to the Scottish Government for comments before publication.
- Co-organise and participate in a seminar with stakeholders for OECD to present, and discuss and exchange the preliminary findings and gather stakeholder perspectives on actions to move forward. This seminar would be organised by the Scottish Government and facilitated by OECD in collaboration with the National Coordinator for the Curriculum Review.
- A final report with the main findings, to be published under the OECD Series Implementing Education Policies.

National Coordination

The National Coordinator will be the main contact between OECD and Scotland. The National Coordinator, with the support of a number of key groups, will:

- Deliver documentation and information to OECD related to the CfE following an OECD outline.
- Organise the assessment visit, in exchange with OECD, including the agenda and practical arrangements. To support the National Coordinator, the OECD will provide:
 - a preparatory document with information for the organisation of the agenda;
 - a descriptive document on the review to provide to those the OECD team will meet during the visit.
- Organise meetings, by video or other, with the OECD team, to provide information, exchange on organisation and content issues.
- Organise and liaise with OECD for participation in the Scottish Practitioner Forum meetings.
- Provide comments to OECD documents as follows:
 - Preliminary findings: provide a general set of comments;
 - First complete draft: transmit and gather comments to provide to OECD;
 - Final complete report: final fact check of key information before finalisation of report.
- Organise the stakeholder engagement event, liaise with the OECD on the draft agenda and participant lists.
- Organise any preparation for the launch of the preliminary and/or final version of the report.

Scottish Practitioner Forum

To ensure that current educational practitioners play a key role in the review process, and in response to the request by OECD for a project advisory group to guide the work and discuss progress and deliverables, the Scottish Government will convene a Scottish Practitioner Forum.

The Forum will work as an advisory board to the OECD team to:

- engage with the OECD team on current curriculum practice in Scotland;
- help shape the development of the review;
- meet with the OECD team during the visit and consider preliminary findings;
- facilitate stakeholder engagement across the country; and
- support the development of the OECD report.

The Forum will be led by an experienced Director of Education nominated by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES).

The group will comprise approximately 12 members. It will include representatives of different stakeholders engaged in delivery of Curriculum for Excellence, from the Scottish Government, local authorities, teachers, school leaders, Higher/Further Education and evaluation and assessment authorities. Focus groups may be set up by the Forum on key issues which emerge during the review, and to ensure wide engagement with the teaching profession.

The relative balance between practitioners from all key phases of the curriculum will be important. Scottish Government, Education Scotland and other education partners will need to ensure that they release sufficient capacity to engage with the review.

National stakeholders support for the review

Education Scotland have a clear role in supporting this review. For example, in providing evidence generated by inspection activities to support the review, enabling a breadth of experiences, curriculum models and approaches to implementation across Scotland to be captured.

Whilst the focus of the review is not based around the National Qualifications (NQs), SQA will also make a significant contribution to the review through the data and intelligence it gathers around the qualifications system.

It is essential that a range of stakeholders will have opportunities to participate in the review. However, any activity should augment, rather than duplicate, activities planned by the OECD. As such, key national bodies will be asked to provide a designated point of support for this work, to represent their organisations on the Practitioner Forum and/or work with the Scottish Government and the OECD to contribute all to relevant activities.