

## CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE REVIEW 2020 JOINT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/OECD DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 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 and in 2015 the OECD was commissioned to carry out an independent review focused on the Broad General Education in order to inform the ongoing development of education policy, practice and leadership in Scotland. With a focus on continual improvement, it was felt that there was value also in following this up with a review of the Senior Phase of CfE.
2. As such, in May 2019, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills announced the commission of an independent review of the Senior Phase curriculum. This received the backing of the Parliament and education stakeholders. The purpose of the review was, originally, to better understand how the Senior Phase curriculum was being implemented in schools (looking at curriculum design and implementation in schools) and to identify any areas for potential development to ensure that this phase of the curriculum contributes effectively to the education of young people in Scotland.
3. In January 2020, the Scottish Parliament called for this review to be extended to all of Curriculum for Excellence including the Broad General Education, the Senior Phase and the articulation between them.
4. Adopting a broader perspective to the review of Curriculum for Excellence, including the Senior Phase, will enable us to: look at the CfE as a whole from a student learner perspective; to explore progress in implementing CfE at all levels in the system; and to assess the effectiveness of the articulation between the BGE and Senior Phase.

### Approach

5. The OECD has accepted an invite to undertake this independent review. 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](#).

6. It is important that we are able to respond to both the need to explore the issues emerging on Senior Phase and to address the will of parliament to also cover the Broad General Education (BGE). To this end, we have agreed with the OECD that the best way to take forward this work is to undertake an overarching review of Curriculum for Excellence that includes the BGE and the Senior Phase. We will build on the existing plans for the OECD to undertake a review of the implementation of Senior Phase and broaden its scope to look at the wider implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, including the BGE and Senior Phase. It will build on the 2015 OECD Recommendations on the BGE as the starting point for the work.

### Scope

7. The overarching aim is to better understand how the curriculum is being implemented in schools and local authorities (looking at its design and implementation in schools) and to identify any areas for potential development to ensure that the curriculum as a whole and the distinct phases of the BGE and Senior Phase contribute effectively to the education of Scottish young people.
8. The review will look into the intentions of the policy, analyse the extent to which it has been realised in schools across Scotland and provide recommendations on ways forward.
9. It will draw on relevant international and Scottish data and available evidence from education stakeholders and partners during OECD visits and meetings, and relevant country practices. This will include research conducted on Curriculum for Excellence and evidence on current provision and approaches to implementation from Education Scotland, local authorities and key stakeholders.
10. The review will be organised around the OECD Implementing Education Policies Framework and look at it from the perspective of the effective implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, with a focus on:

#### **A: Smart policy design**

This dimension will look at Curriculum for Excellence in terms of its vision, approach and resources. This implies reviewing: the level of understanding of the vision and purpose of the curriculum; the extent to which this vision and purpose is being achieved; the key elements of the curriculum framework; any relevant or notable impact on specific subject areas and; the adoption of the curriculum in schools and at a regional level in terms of approaches to learning and teaching.

For the Broad General Education, this will include a follow up on the following recommendations from the 2015 OECD Review:

- Create a new narrative for the Curriculum for Excellence.
- Simplify and clarify core guidance, including in the definitions of what constitutes the Curriculum for Excellence.

For the Senior Phase this will include a focus on:

- The choice of subjects, pathways, choices and qualifications and awards available to meet the needs of young people.
- Multi-level teaching, consortium arrangements and other approaches that schools are using to increase choice.
- The equity of the Senior Phase curriculum provision across Scotland in terms of geography and socio-economic factors.

It will also include an analysis of the transition from the BGE into the Senior Phase.

### **B: Inclusive stakeholder engagement**

This dimension will look at how different stakeholders have been involved through the implementation of the BGE and the Senior Phase. This implies reviewing the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders including teaching professionals, parents and pupils, schools, colleges, employers and others, as well as partnerships between schools and colleges.

### **C: Conducive context**

This dimension will look at how existing complementary policies, the educational governance, system capacity and external context have contributed to implementation. It will include a focus on the national and local support and guidance for implementation, as well as the capacity of schools and school leadership. In terms of complementary policies, it will particularly look into how assessment and evaluation align with CfE and the types of capacity building and professional learning approaches to support the implementation of the CfE.

For the Broad General Education, this will include a follow up on the recommendations from the 2015 OECD Review:

- Develop an integrating framework for assessment and evaluation that encompasses all system levels.
- Strike a more even balance between the formative focus of assessment and developing a robust evidence base on learning outcomes and progression.
- Strengthen evaluation and research, including independent knowledge creation.

For the Senior Phase, this will include a focus on:

- The alignment of the curriculum with external assessments and other school evaluation approaches.

### **D: A coherent implementation strategy**

This dimension will review the extent to which the different elements, in terms of design, stakeholder engagement and contextual factors, including the timing, pace of change, communication and other approaches have been brought together into a coherent and action oriented whole strategy.

For the Broad General Education, this will include a follow up on the following recommendations from the 2015 OECD Review:

- Ensure a consolidated and evidence-informed strategic approach to equity policies.
- Develop metrics that do justice to the full range of CfE capacities informing a bold understanding of quality and equity.
- Strengthen the professional leadership of CfE and the “middle”.
- Develop targeted, networked, evaluated innovation in secondary school learning environments to enhance engagement.
- Develop a coherent strategy for building teacher and leadership social capital.

For the Senior Phase this will include a focus on:

- How the different types of Senior Phase learning opportunities (academic, vocational, wider achievement) are promoted, measured and supported as part of a wider implementation strategy.

### Guiding Principles

11. Some key principles are proposed to guide this work from the outset in terms of the focus and the approach:
- The focus on young people’s experience and learning should be the most important consideration throughout the review.
  - The principles and aspirations of CfE have had widespread support from practitioners, parents, learners and politicians in Scotland and, as such, are not being questioned in this review. This work will focus on understanding how the policy aims are being implemented in practice across schools in Scotland for the benefit of learners.
  - It should aim to identify what is working well, learning lessons from what is not working and developing advice for further improvement should that be necessary.
  - The approach will be collaborative, involving Scottish education stakeholders (in particular through Scotland’s Curriculum and Assessment Board) and practitioners throughout the process.

### Methodology

12. The Scottish Government has asked the OECD to lead the independent review, building on the successful and well received review of Curriculum for Excellence led by the OECD in 2015. It will be undertaken as part of its [Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education](#) activity, through which the OECD provides tailored support to individual countries and education systems to analyse and support the development and implementation of education policies.
13. The review will focus on approaches to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence in terms of the curriculum, learning and teaching.
14. The methodology proposed includes an OECD policy assessment to be developed following consultations with key stakeholders during a country visit, and a stakeholder engagement seminar to consult on current situation, preliminary

analysis, conclusions and recommendations on ways forward, engaging national, regional and local partners.

15. The review would run from February 2020 to conclude with a report in February 2021 (published by OECD officially at a later date) and involve a one week assessment visit in Q1 2020, with further stakeholder engagement work in the Q2-3 on the initial findings.

## OECD

16. The OECD, in exchange with Scottish counterparts, 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.
- Conduct a review visit to 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 Scotland for comments before publication.
- Co-organise and participate in a seminar with stakeholders for OECD to present, and discuss and exchange on 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

17. A 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 Curriculum for Excellence 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 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.
- Organising the stakeholder engagement event, liaising 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**

18. 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.
19. The Forum will be led by an experienced Director of Education nominated by the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) - Tony McDaid, Executive Director of Education Resources, South Lanarkshire Council.
20. This group would be limited to 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.
21. 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**

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. It is essential that a range of stakeholders have the opportunity 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.

### **Main OECD deliverables**

25. The main OECD deliverables 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 Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland, provides feedback on progress to date in its implementation and offers recommendations for next steps. An example can be found [here](#). The OECD will aim to finalise the report by the end of February 2021.

**Scottish Government  
February 2020**