

Directors of Education
(to be cascaded to all schools)



20 September 2022

‘Let’s Talk Scottish Education’ – National Discussion on the future of Education

The Scottish Government and CoSLA will tomorrow (September 21 2022) launch a National Discussion on the vision for education in Scotland: “Let’s Talk Scottish Education”.

As you are aware, a National Discussion to create a compelling and consensual vision for the future of Scottish education was a recommendation within Professor Ken Muir’s report “Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education”.

There is much to be proud of in education in Scotland, and as we continue this ambitious period of education reform the time is right to reflect and consider the attributes, skills and knowledge young people will need in the future, and the associated support they will need towards gathering these.

The vision which is created following the National Discussion will set out what education in Scotland needs to look like in the near future and for twenty years from now. However, the work towards setting that vision will begin immediately.

Professor Carol Campbell and Professor Alma Harris have agreed to act as independent facilitators for the National Discussion which will run between September 21 and December 5 and report in Spring 2023.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for children, young people and all those who support them to have their voices heard in a debate which aims to establish a compelling and consensual vision for Scottish education.

We are writing to you to ask for your support in creating opportunities for children, young people, families, teachers, schools, local authorities and our wider communities to take part in the National Discussion in the way in which teachers feel best suits the needs of learners, teachers and members of the wider school community in your area.

A range of resources have been developed to support discussions including discussion guides and videos. We want teachers to be empowered to select from the package of resources and use the

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elements which they feel are the most appropriate for them and their learners. These resources will be available from tomorrow at: <https://consult.gov.scot/national-discussion-scottish-education>

We hope that you will identify opportunities within your schools and local authority areas to engage learners, parents, practitioners, parents and carers in this important and exciting discussion.

A summary of the scope and purpose of the discussion, and the links to the wider programme of education reform, is appended to this letter.

If you have any queries, please contact nationaldiscussiononeducation@gov.scot



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Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills



COUNCILLOR TONY BUCHANAN

CoSLA Children and Young People's Spokesperson

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Background information on the education reform programme

Let's Talk Scottish Education

It has been 20 years since Scotland last held a national debate on the future of education – a debate which led to the creation of Curriculum for Excellence.

Curriculum for Excellence is still recognised – both here and around the world – as the right foundation for Scottish education. It's here to stay.

But a lot has changed in the last 20 years – the education landscape has changed beyond recognition, as has the world around us.

The COVID pandemic in particular has shone a spotlight on many of the strengths and weaknesses in the current education system.

The time has come for a new national discussion.

A discussion which will give everyone the chance to have their voice heard.

A discussion which will take us closer to delivering excellence and equity for all of today's learners and for future generations.

Want to have your say?

Then Let's Talk Scottish Education.

National Discussion on Education

Everyone who has a stake in the future of Scottish education is being invited to join 'Let's Talk Scottish Education' – Our National Discussion, to help us build on the successes of our system and ensure it remains world leading for future generations.

Why the time is right for a National Discussion:

In the two decades since the last National Discussion on education, we have seen significant changes across the education system and within our society more generally. Professor Ken Muir's review: ['Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education'](#) recommended holding a national discussion to establish a compelling and consensual vision for the future of Scottish education.

The 'Let's Talk Scottish Education' - Our National Discussion will build a vision which will shape the future of education in Scotland.

Children and young people, and those who have supported them, have had the unprecedented experience of being educated in a pandemic and are therefore uniquely placed to inform the future of our education system in Scotland.

Our qualifications and assessment system are being reviewed and our education bodies are being replaced. Now is the right time to reflect on what works well, what we have learned about our systems

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and to consider what comes next to help all our children and young people to thrive at school, and throughout their lives.

It is vital that all the decisions we take are underpinned by a strong vision for the education that Scotland needs for the future.

Recent reports on education, skills and research have produced highly valuable insights, and the National Discussion is an opportunity to carefully consider what we have already heard as well as reach out to others as we work together to build a compelling vision for the future of Scottish Education.

This vision will inform how we deliver education in Scotland for generations to come.

The National Discussion will deliver a '*Call to Action*' with clear priorities for the future of Scottish education that engages learners and meets their wide ranging and diverse needs through the work of everyone in education. The Call to Action will provide momentum for action, to help us realise our vision.

- The '*Call to Action*' includes recognising that the world and Scotland are changing rapidly, and Scotland's learners, their needs, priorities, and ambitions are changing too.
- Scotland's children and young people, their parents/carers, the practitioners involved, and the wider Scottish community need to inform the future of education in Scotland.
- Building on strengths in Scotland's education system, it is time to consider a vision for 'what's next' and the changes required to realise this vision in practice.

'Let's Talk Scottish Education' – Our National Discussion will launch on the 21st September at the Scottish Learning Festival and will close on 5th December.

You can contact the team leading the work on the National Discussion at nationaldiscussion@education.gov.scot

[#LetsTalkScottishEducation](#)

Let's Talk Qualifications and Assessment

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced in October 2021 the intention to reform qualifications and assessments to ensure learners' achievements are fairly recognised. The aim is to ensure that all senior phase learners have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the breadth, depth and relevance of their learning. The only caveat being that externally assessed examinations will remain part of any new system of qualifications and assessment because they are internationally valued as a method of applying a consistent and objective standard as part of an overall approach. Louise Hayward, Professor Emerita of Educational Assessment and Innovation at the University of Glasgow has been appointed to lead this work.

Professor Hayward is undertaking an inclusive and participatory programme of stakeholder engagement with the aim of ensuring that everyone with a stake in the future of qualifications and assessments, including individual learners have the opportunity to participate in the Review process. This approach is intended to ensure that the Review leads to recommendations for a future system that is principled, practical and highly regarded.

Membership of the Independent Review Group which Professor Hayward convenes is drawn from the following communities:

- those for whom qualifications matter most, individual learners and, as appropriate, their parents or carers;

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- those who are engaged in the design, development and delivery of qualifications, teachers, Head teachers, examination boards, regulators, local policy makers and communities
- those who use qualifications – schools, colleges, employers and universities

Each IRG member is bringing together representatives from across their communities to form a 'Collaborative Community Group (CCG) ensuring voices from a diverse background are heard.

In addition to the IRG and the CCGs there will also be engagement opportunities with schools and colleges, as well as a public consultation in the autumn.

Professor Hayward will take into account the emerging findings of the National Discussion.

Professor Hayward will provide an Interim Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills by the end of 2022 and a final report in March 2023.

You can contact Professor Hayward's secretariat at qualificationsreform@gov.scot

Let's Talk New Education Bodies

The Scottish Government accepted the recommendations in Professor Ken Muir's report as a starting point for Education Reform. This included the creation of three new national education bodies; a new qualifications body, a new national agency for Scottish education, and an independent inspectorate body. These will replace SQA and Education Scotland. Building on the successes within Scottish education, these bodies will reflect the culture and values that we want to be embedded throughout our education and skills system. We are committed to delivering real change but recognise this is not something Government can or should deliver alone. We want design and the delivery of the new bodies to be informed by the widest range of voices.

This will be a multi-phase programme of reform covering discovery, design and delivery and transition activity, with the new national bodies going live from 2024.

Throughout the reform process, both the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland will continue to deliver crucial work supporting learners, teachers and professionals.

We are committed to bringing the widest possible range of voices and views into the conversation around designing the new bodies and will be proactive in engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, practitioners and everyone who has a stake in their success.

You can contact the team leading work on structural reform and the establishment of new public bodies at educationreform@gov.scot

Let's Talk Post-School Education and Training

A post school education, research and skills ecosystem that delivers for all people is critical to the future success of society and the economy. This is vital to ensure that everyone has the right skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to achieve their potential and to lead fulfilling lives, contributing to the wellbeing of their communities and the planet.

The development of the Purpose and Principles for the post school education, research and skills ecosystem presents a bold and exciting opportunity to galvanise all actors across the system behind a shared purpose, articulating clearly defined roles and responsibilities and providing a clear strategic framework for decision making based on the outcomes we want to see. It is an opportunity to start to shift cultural expectations and challenge perceptions of what the system can deliver.

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This will be a shared endeavour with learners, employers of all shapes and sizes from the public and private sector and parts of the economy and wider society who benefit most directly from the current ecosystems as well as the staff and leaders of the agencies, colleges, universities third sector and other institutions who are responsible for delivery. We will also proactively seek out the views of those who choose not to engage

This work will fulfil the Scottish Government's commitment to publish a statement of strategic intent for the system following the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) recommendations in its review "Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research".

You can contact the team leading on the development of the Purpose and Principles at Purposeandprinciples@gov.scot

Next steps

Our reforms will ensure that every person in Scotland is equipped with the education they need to reach their full potential. We look forward to listening carefully to learners, teachers, parents, carers and practitioners and to working closely with our partners across Scotland to achieve this.

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