

EIS Submission to the Muir Review

November 2021

1.1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland

Please select from dropdown

Strongly Agree

1.2. What do you think should be retained/and or changed?

Commitment to social justice, equity and equality

The EIS is clear that the commitment to social justice, equity and equality that underpins the vision for CfE, and that is the bedrock of the system of comprehensive education in Scotland, should absolutely be retained.

The curriculum must be framed in such a way as to reflect the shared ambition of achieving greater societal and educational equality, as reflected in the Professional Standards for teachers; through the consensus that has formed among all stakeholders with a key interest in Scottish Education; and the rhetoric at least, of all political parties.

The Four Capacities

The four capacities of CfE capture the intention of realising the human right to education and preparing young people for democratic citizenship. It is critical that these are retained, though with clarity that the capacities co-exist in equal measure to one another. There has been a tendency to prioritise being a 'successful learner' over the remaining three, which somewhat undermines the intention to support young people to become wholly well-rounded individuals.

Within professional learning for teachers related to the refreshed CfE narrative, in addressing the four capacities, it would be important to include an explicit emphasis on their relationship to critical thinking skills in an era of fake news and misinformation; to tolerance and respect amidst an intensely polarised political climate; and to commitment to sustainability as the planet faces climate crisis.

Creativity and Enjoyment in Learning

The EIS sees it as important that the vision of CfE continues to signal the potential for rich, enjoyable learning experiences for young people. While the vision of CfE is 'permission-giving' of teachers to adopt creative approaches and many young people have benefitted from this since the inception of CfE, the creativity promised by the vision has not been universally experienced. This is in large part due to a combination of lack of proper resourcing and the prolongation of a hierarchical, accountability culture, which combines to undermine the capacity of the teaching profession to develop and maintain the levels of creativity promised by CfE.

For example, there has been a chronic lack of time for collaboration among teaching professionals to support creativity- teachers in Scotland are among the most class-contacted in the OECD.

Similarly, the continuation of large class sizes and overcrowded classrooms, and the physical layout of classrooms and school buildings generally, frequently militate against teachers employing the kinds of creative pedagogies, with emphasis on personalisation and choice, that they would wish to, for the benefit of their learners, who increasingly present with more and more complex additional support needs. Such constraints within and pressures upon, daily professional practice, damage teacher wellbeing and morale, which in turn, impacts, in addition to lack of resourcing, negatively on the learning experiences of learners.

The BGE, especially in Primary, is cluttered with priorities which teachers are under pressure to meet, this too eroding the capacity for creativity, as well as the ability to ensure breadth and depth of learning. A clutter of national initiatives, for example, 'Book Week', 'Eco Week', 'Maths Week', however well-meaning, results in a crowding of priorities that schools and teachers feel pressure to respond to and that place strain on the capacity to deliver breadth and depth of learning.

There is also an over-emphasis within Primary on Literacy and Numeracy, and also on Science, to the detriment of creative and social subjects. For example, art and music are frequently being taught in the context of interdisciplinary learning, with the result that some key skills are being missed and progression in learning interrupted. These trends pre-date Covid and the recovery curriculum which has encouraged a particular focus on Literacy and Numeracy, in large part driven by the demands of NIF accountability reporting and by the promotion of STEM education in pursuit of economic rather than wholly educational objectives.

Within Secondary, the BGE phase, which in spite of the pressures, generally does feature greater creativity, is frequently cut short with S3 pupils, rather than completing the BGE phase, being prepared for qualifications that they

should sit within the senior phase, because time is too short in S4 to enable proper coverage of course content.

In the senior phase, timetabling, annual presentation patterns and the associated assessment and exam treadmill, strangle creativity, whilst breadth and depth, and often enjoyment of learning, are sacrificed in place of rushed, superficial learning in preparation for exams.

In addition to the compromises that this forces with regards to breadth, depth and enjoyment of learning, the divergence from the more learner-centred, equitable approaches that characterise the BGE, are displaced by the demands of course coverage within very truncated timescales.

In both the senior phase and the BGE, the expectation to deliver certain narrow 'attainment' outcomes is ever-prevalent, with the perception being that the strength of local authority and school performance and reputation rest on what is reflected by the HMIE inspection scoring system, this in turn resulting in a cottage industry of local authority 'mini inspection' processes.

Rather than being firmly encouraged to adopt more creative approaches to learning and teaching, with stakes in the attainment and accountability drive so high, a more risk averse approach is generally taken by schools and teachers than CfE's original design had intended.

Change needs to be enacted on all of these fronts if the promise of creativity at the heart of young people's learning experiences is to be realised in full.

Assessment for Learning and Equity

The vision of CfE also promises a greater utilisation of assessment approaches that are more learner-centred and more likely to lead to more equitable outcomes for those who have not typically been beneficiaries of the one-off high stakes assessment approach upon which Scotland continues to rely.

The EIS would wish to see the emphasis on formative assessment retained, and the system and the teaching profession genuinely supported and empowered to design and employ assessment strategies in such a way as to better support the learning of all, rather than be fettered by government-driven assessment priorities such as SNSAs within the BGE, and by outdated assessment approaches and curriculum design in the senior phase.

These approaches actively undermine the vision of CfE with regards to assessment:- the key role for formative assessment in the interests of sound learning and greater equity of outcome; and minimal high-stakes summative assessment known to favour more affluent young people (and

more recently cited as a source of poor wellbeing by adolescents in Scotland, particularly girls).

The EIS is clear that assessment approaches need to be more closely and consistently aligned with the aims of the curriculum.

Teacher Autonomy and Professional Judgement

CfE encourages teacher autonomy and agency, and respect for teacher professional judgement in relation to curriculum making, pedagogy and assessment.

The EIS believes that this element of the CfE vision should remain intact though is of the view that significant headway remains to be made towards realising this vision. The development of the empowerment agenda is critical to any future progress on strengthening teacher autonomy and continuing to build trust in teacher professional judgement.

Regarding assessment, the CfE vision of trust in teacher professional judgement has been undermined at various stages as reflected by the Scottish Government's introduction of SNSAs and the reluctance of the SQA to relinquish control of quality assurance of results produced via the Alternative Certification Model in 2021 and during this session, even in the event of in extremis public health conditions resulting in exams cancellation. Such approaches by national government and the SQA are at odds with both the CfE vision and the empowerment agenda.

Moving forward with reform, teacher autonomy and professional judgement will be key to avoiding the risk of reform delivering an overly simplistic, top-down, one size fits all approach to curriculum and assessment across curricular areas, and for all learning communities and learners.

The reform process needs to take account of the differences in approach that are required within different curricular and subject areas, and among learners, as articulated by the profession.

Value of Early Years Education

The EIS is a longstanding supporter of high quality Early Years (EY) education and strongly welcomed the equal inclusion of the 3-5 stage within the 3-18 curriculum and the emphasis on play-based learning throughout the Early Level of CfE. The EIS is fully aware of the wealth of international research, including from the OECD itself, which finds in favour of governments investing well in EY education, firmly featuring a play-based approach, leading to stronger outcomes for children cognitively, socially and emotionally throughout their schooling; and stronger employment and socio-economic outcomes, better physical and mental health outcomes, and more positive contributions to society in adulthood. Critical to ensuring

these outcomes, are high levels of qualification and professionalism among the workforce.

In spite of the government rhetoric relating to increased investment in Early Years, while the offer of 1140 hours of free childcare for all 3-5 year olds and vulnerable two year olds is welcome, the EIS is concerned that the value of education within the extended provision is diminishing- for reasons of budget-saving- as evidenced by the 52% reduction in the number of teachers employed within the sector over the past ten years, as a result of austerity cuts. The EIS is clear that 3-5 year olds are being short-changed by the current statutory provision which loosely promises only undefined 'access to a teacher', and for this reason we continue to campaign for the restoration of teacher expertise within the EY context, for the benefit of our youngest learners.

Section 2 - Curriculum and Assessment

2.1. Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions.

Please select from dropdown

Disagree

2.2. Please share what you believe currently contributes to a coherent progression.

CfE design and the associated documentation may reflect the aspiration of coherent progression and the realisation of learners' ambitions but words written on paper are not sufficient to achieve such goals or 'the best possible educational experiences' for young people.

Resourcing is critical to this and, unfortunately, whilst the ambitions of CfE are large, funding for Education has fallen far short of what is required to achieve these ambitions over the lifespan of CfE to date.

For this reason, transitions at critical points in the learner journey are not as smooth as they should be.

Early Years Transition

Where Early Years (EY) education is valued and appropriately funded by local authorities, EY to Primary transition processes can work well, with EY teachers and other practitioners provided time to collaborate with teachers in Early Primary.

However, the disappearance of Nursery teachers- critical bridging professionals- from the EY sector, lack of consistent support within Primary for play-based approaches, and the introduction of assessment models that clash with a play-based ethos and pedagogy, combine to undermine some of the benefits that the 3-18 curriculum offers by way of EY to Primary transition.

Primary Transition

Whilst logistically in some ways it should be more straightforward for class teachers to collaborate around year-to-year transitions within Primary, this requires time for collaboration. With current class contact arrangements and the excessive workload burdens arising for example, from large class sizes, opportunities for Primary teachers to work together on year-to-year transitions are limited.

Similarly, transition from Primary to Secondary requires to be better resourced. In the past, local authorities were able to employ staff whose roles were dedicated to supporting Primary to Secondary transitions; funding constraints have meant that such posts have largely disappeared and time for Principal and Class Teachers to lead and sustain this work is severely stretched.

Secondary Transition

Within Secondary Education, in addition to issues relating to shortage of time to share knowledge and experiences of working with individual young people, BGE to senior phase transition jars because of the misfit of approaches to learning, teaching and assessment across the two phases of the curriculum. The ethos of the senior phase is very much determined by the assessment demands and associated curriculum design that are legacy from a previous system.

Associated curricular documentation for the BGE and the senior phase appears to have been authored by different personnel, and arguably, is light on reference to research evidence which underpins the respective rationales.

Senior Phase Transition

The roll-out of the DYW agenda has seen school-college transitions work better for some students than others as a result of geography, variable resourcing and effectiveness of local partnership arrangements.

The progression of some young people through their learner journey is hindered by continuing lack of parity of esteem across so-called vocational and academic qualifications, and lack of progression opportunities within some subject areas, often as a result of staffing constraints.

Further compounding the issue is that teachers, including those who specifically support careers education, have had little opportunity to engage in professional learning around the range of qualifications that are on offer from the SQA and other awarding bodies, with a view to building alternative, more coherent, pathways for learners within their school communities.

Professional learning is also required for teachers who wish to offer certain alternative qualification options for their learners but whose initial teacher education, while related, may not have prepared them to deliver specific aspects of new content. In addition to insufficient staffing, lack of confidence among some staff who would be well-placed to deliver alternative options, further limits what can be offered to young people to support coherent progression.

The lack of true personalisation and choice within senior phase pathways due to a lack of resources and to lack of parity of esteem across different qualification types, can see young people pursue courses of study that are not well matched to their interests or their previous learning.

ASN Transitions

ASN transitions continue to be problematic at various points, with lack of resourcing again featuring heavily among the reasons for this. Another issue lies with continuity of support staff provision. Whilst children with additional support needs often receive support within Early Years and throughout Primary from the same support staff team, when they are transitioning to Secondary, the support staff do not move with the child, which can both be emotionally unsettling for the young person amidst a new and bigger learning environment, and interruptive of progression in their learning.

Young people with an ASD or complex additional support needs need enhanced transition support to colleges or adult services, both of which have reduced, causing parents to reduce hours of work to care for those disabled young people and/or the shifting of staffing resource away from other services for people with disabilities- effectively robbing Peter to pay Paul'.

2.3 Please share ideas you may have to improve learner progression across stages and sectors.

As suggested in the previous answer, sufficiency of staffing resource is critical to enabling improvement in this respect.

Dedicated staffing to support transitions at key stages should be in place, not solely for Primary- Secondary transition as was previously the case, but at all stages of transition from one sector to another.

Further to this, additional staffing resource is essential to free up time to enable teachers to collaborate around transitions. An overall reduction on class contact time could contribute to this endeavour but it should be borne in mind that there will be many demands placed upon the time that will be freed up by the 1.5 hours per week reduction recently promised by the Scottish Government. The EIS believes that further reduction to 20 hours of class contact time per week, bringing the teaching profession in Scotland more in line with OECD counterparts, is very much needed to support transitions, learners' progression and many other priorities.

Additionally, as also referenced in the previous answer, relevant professional learning, culture change regarding how different types of learning are valued, better alignment of the BGE and senior phase, and resourcing to enable more diverse senior phase pathways would lead to better outcomes for learners with regards to progression.

3.1. In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners.

Please select from drop
down

Disagree

3.2. Please share ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance this in future.

Insufficient resourcing inhibits learning communities from meeting the full range of needs of their learners- large class sizes; lack of sufficient ASN support and expertise in school, and of access to external specialist (e.g. EAL, speech and language therapy, educational psychologists) and multi-agency support; the limitations of the physical environment; and lack of time for reflection and collaboration, combine to undermine the gains that could be made from the autonomy offered by CfE.

As previously referenced, the EIS believes that pressure to respond to an array of national initiatives impinges on the ability of school communities to act with autonomy in designing bespoke curricula in the interests of their learners.

The limitations on school empowerment in this regard are further compounded by the fact that the drive around such initiatives is often underpinned by an expectation that teachers can deliver everything and

anything without appropriate initial teacher education or professional learning.

The same applies with regards to the expectation that all teachers will support the delivery of Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing outcomes for learners. This is particularly challenging for Secondary teachers many of whose initial teacher education will not have featured these elements and who have had little access to relevant professional learning in the period which followed these expectations being set.

With this in mind, the EIS is clear that there needs to be much greater investment in quality teacher education that meets the needs of teachers at all stages of their careers, and the requisite time provided to teachers to engage meaningfully in this.

A further inhibitor to empowerment and autonomy is the rigidity and narrowly defined expectations of the inspection process, which are at odds with the wide-ranging definitions within CfE. This disconnect encourages conformity with the perceived expectations of HMIE rather than the exercising of autonomy to create bespoke curricula in response to the needs of school communities. Where schools do seek to do this, they risk 'failure' as judged by HMIE. Within such a culture, too much rests reputationally on the outcomes of HMIE inspection to allow the full benefits of the autonomy promised by CfE to be realised in reality.

To support the genuine empowerment and autonomy of school communities to design curricula that meet the needs of their learners, the EIS would identify the following requirements:

- Investment to deliver smaller class sizes;
- Investment in specialist ASN support in the form of teachers and support assistants;
- Investment in external and multi-agency ASN and GIRFEC support- for example, EAL, speech and language therapy, educational psychology, and child and adolescent mental health services;
- Investment in the school estate to create learning spaces that meet the increasingly diverse and complex needs of learners;
- Proper investment in play-based learning and a move away from assessment approaches that are misaligned with this;
- Decluttering of local curricula supported by less demand/pressure upon schools to respond to an ever-growing suite of national initiatives;
- Support for schools from national agencies on curriculum design that can support a diverse range of experiences and pathways for young people;
- Time for teachers to engage in quality professional learning and collaboration around curriculum making to suit the needs of the

learners within their school communities, including to take account of the increasingly diverse nature of school communities in Scotland;

- Professional learning to enable teachers to become familiar with a wider range of qualifications and potential pathways in the senior phase and to grow confidence in delivering them;
- Additional staffing to enable the delivery of a wider range of courses/ learning experiences;
- Careful and consistent messaging to parents about the senior phase- what it is for and how it should differ from their own past experiences of upper Secondary school;
- To stop setting school communities in competition with one another- e.g. through inspection scores;
- A progressive alternative to inspection that features practitioner-led evaluation processes.

4.1. The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment.

The misalignment of curriculum and assessments is outlined in the OECD report [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence : Into the Future](#).

Please select from dropdown

Neither Agree/Disagree

4.2. Please share your views of the potential advantages of establishing such an Agency.

The extent to which the current misalignment of curriculum and assessment will be addressed by the creation of a new body is wholly dependent on how such an agency will be configured- its underpinning values, its vision and aims, and the extent to which these are held and shared by the staff who will work within the organisation.

The creation of such an agency presents a much-needed opportunity to do things radically differently and better, but the extent to which the opportunity will be realised is dependent on the depth of the political courage to act decisively.

The EIS is in no doubt that the time for radical change has come. There is a real opportunity to radically reset what have been quite dysfunctional governance arrangements of the organisation that has responsibility for qualifications in Scotland.

The EIS is of the clear view that, unlike the SQA, any new body must be properly attuned to the needs of and fully accountable to, the teaching profession which supports learners to learn, and within the senior phase, to acquire the knowledge and skills required to achieve qualifications.

The governance arrangements for the new body must be configured to ensure genuine support for the profession in its work with students otherwise the potential advantages derived from the creation of the new body will be lost.

In establishing any new body that would have joint responsibility for curriculum and assessment, clarity would be needed regarding its relationship to the Scottish Government Learning Directorate, from which the SQA in recent years has lacked sufficient independence.

Instead of having responsibility to a government- appointed board, the governance of the new body should be more akin to that of the General Teaching Council, which while reflecting the broad partnership that there is across Scottish Education, is structured to ensure that the majority of seats are held by teachers. This ensures that the GTCS is able to strike an appropriate balance in enacting its statutory functions and responding to the needs of the teaching profession who in turn support Scotland's learners. Similar governance arrangements should be considered for any new body, in the view of the EIS.

The EIS is also of the view that the death knell has been sounded on the unqualified continuation of the kind of high stakes exam-based assessment that has driven the senior phase curriculum for far too long. An alternative model of assessment that is more closely aligned to the ambitions of CfE, that supports learning and teaching, that will better meet the needs of learners and that will enable the delivery of more equitable outcomes, is long overdue.

CfE encourages formative assessment approaches and trust in teacher professional judgement. The SQA has not readily endorsed the same principles. The creation of a new body could offer the opportunity to build on the promise of CfE in relation to assessment practice within CfE, not only within the senior phase but for the BGE, also. The 3-15 elements of the learner journey are outwith the expertise of the SQA so it would be inappropriate from that perspective, also, to over-rely on SQA experience with regards to assessment for the 3-15 cohort.

Finally, the SQA has recently been shown to have been weak on meeting the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty, hence the intervention by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The focus on equality and diversity matters within any new body must be sufficiently sharpened across all areas of its work.

4.3. Please share your views of the potential disadvantages of establishing such an Agency.

A potential disadvantage that the EIS can see in establishing a joint curriculum and assessment agency is the very real risk that assessment will dominate the curriculum even more than at present.

If not extremely carefully configured to avoid it, there is a danger that in creating a new agency with combined responsibility for curriculum and assessment, the curriculum for children and young people from ages 3-18 will be entirely shaped by assessment demands rather than by what matters to their development as human beings and as citizens as captured within the four capacities. Assessment could become even more formalised and dominant within the BGE than it is at present, and the senior phase might not be sufficiently reformed to enable the realisation of ambitions of breadth, depth and enjoyment of learning. Curriculum-making (and associated pedagogy) could be further forced to serve assessment (and accountability) agendas and the opportunities for reform missed or even subverted. These are risks that must be avoided.

There is also a risk that SQA and Education Scotland are simply rebranded under the umbrella of a new organisation and the worst elements of each body combined and the new agency given too much power.

Since the inception of the national qualifications, SQA and Education Scotland have struggled to work together collaboratively in support of the teaching profession whose role it is to deliver qualifications. The EIS has been in many meetings in which one body or the other, on learning of the needs of the profession, has pointed to the other as having responsibility for addressing these needs. Rarely has the EIS seen the two organisations combine forces in order to respond to the needs of the teaching profession to deliver qualifications that have been hampered with difficulty since their rushed introduction. It would be difficult to imagine a successful merger of these two organisations, if this were to be among the options being considered.

5.1. The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools.

Please visit the [SQA qualifications hub](#) to see the full breadth of existing SQA qualifications.

Please select from dropdown

Agree 

5.2. Please identify the main factors, if any, that support a broader range of SQA qualifications being included in the curriculum in secondary schools.

The curriculum should respond to the wide range of interests and talents that all young people have. Secondary school genuinely needs to be for everyone and needs to be responsive to the significantly increased staying on rates that have been the trend for some time now, with only around 10% of young people now leaving school at the end of S4.

With these factors in mind, it is important that schools are able to offer a broad range of learning experiences, courses and qualifications. Importantly, not all learning experiences require to be qualification-based, primarily SQA-awarded, in order to be valid and valuable.

That said, the opportunity to acquire qualifications is an entitlement of all young people within the senior phase, since these are the passports to future learning and employment.

Although in theory the SQA offers a wide range of qualifications, in reality, schools are unable to make these available for their learners because of limits to staffing; or where courses are being offered at a variety of levels, meaning that content is often vastly different, staffing constraints are forcing multi-level, in actual fact in many cases, multi-course teaching, within the one class.

The benefits of flexibility cannot be properly realised without the requisite staffing levels to support it. In order to offer genuine flexibility to learners, and to avoid scenarios whereby teachers are delivering sometimes even three and four courses at a time to senior phase learners in the same class-significantly more teachers are needed.

As outlined in response to a previous question, teachers, including those who specifically support careers education, have had little opportunity to engage in professional learning around the range of qualifications that are on offer from the SQA and other awarding bodies, with a view to building alternative pathways for learners within their school communities. Time needs to be made available for this.

Professional learning and the time to engage meaningfully in it is also required for teachers who wish to offer certain alternative qualification options for their learners but whose initial teacher education, while related, may not have prepared them to deliver specific aspects of new content.

Where there are courses on offer and staff with expertise to deliver them, the appetite of learners to engage can be an issue because of the lack of parity of esteem across so-called vocational and academic qualifications,

with parents often discouraging their children's uptake of courses that hold lesser status.

Whilst an ambition of CfE is to have parity of esteem across all areas of learning, it will remain a challenge for the Education sector to realise this whilst society as a whole largely attributes greater value to and employers pay more for, certain types of employment and the associated qualifications, than others. Such variance in the valuing of different types of work and employment within society continues to reflect structural inequalities in relation to gender and social class.

Finally, simply offering a broader range of qualifications to learners in the senior phase will not suffice in improving the quality of their learning experiences. Timetabling and curriculum architecture on the basis of two-year qualifications, leading to a better-paced, more coherent senior phase, that also features some greater depth of learning, is also critical.

5.3. Please share any ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance the role of a broader variety of qualifications in the curriculum in secondary schools.

As referenced in response to an earlier question, additional staffing and sufficient time for teachers to become familiar with the full range of qualifications on offer within their subject areas, and the associated SCQF equivalencies, is important. Also needed are the opportunities and time to engage in any requisite professional learning to enable the delivery of qualifications additional to those that are covered within initial teacher education.

To respond to the continuing lack of parity of esteem between different types of learning, some reframing of the narrative with regards to the value of different types of learning experience and associated qualifications is needed. There is still a tendency to place greater value on learning and qualifications associated with progression to university. Not only does this unduly influence many young people to study in a direction that is not closely matched to their interests, it undervalues the learning that is overtaken by those who choose so-called vocational learning options. At least within the context of school education, equal value should be attributed to all types of learning that young people choose to pursue and any associated qualifications.

Also important is that across the suite of available qualifications and within the associated courses, there are sufficient opportunities for learning and aligned assessment, including on an interdisciplinary basis, that are relevant to the needs of life in the 21st century in relation to tackling

climate change, addressing growing misinformation, prejudice and intolerance, and responding to digitalisation while upholding the values of democratic citizenship.

Finally, as also previously highlighted, timetabling and curriculum architecture on the basis of two-year qualifications, leading to a better-paced, more coherent senior phase, that also features greater depth of learning, is also critical if the benefits of a broader offer of qualifications and also of non-qualification based but nonetheless valuable learning experiences, are to be offered.

6.1. Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments.

Please select from
dropdown

Disagree

6.2. Please share any comments you may have on the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessments, and what could be done to deliver improvements.

Whilst there have been significant strides taken with regards to digital learning over the past several years, and this progress further propelled by the experiences of the pandemic, the digital infrastructure across the school estate falls far short of what is required for 21st century learning in this respect.

EIS members report that digital hardware and software are often too sparse, often outdated and frequently unreliable. Internet connectivity is variable according to geography and bandwidth. And while teachers have undertaken significant amounts of professional learning to enable the delivery of remote learning across a range of platforms during the periods of school closure, much more professional learning, and time for teachers to engage in it, is required to bring about further developments.

As we progress through Education recovery and beyond, it will be important to ensure that the learning gained from experiences of digital delivery during the pandemic is built upon with appropriate support for and development of new pedagogical approaches using technology, which can be fully accessed by all learners on an equitable basis. Furthermore, with the right approaches in place, there is significant potential for targeted interventions to complement core classwork for learners from

disadvantaged backgrounds and/ or who have additional support needs or who face other barriers to their learning that can be overcome somewhat by the additional use of technology.

That said, the EIS does not believe that technology must feature in all learning experiences and activities. On the contrary, our view is that it should, by design, be absent from much of it, with learners supported and encouraged to interact meaningfully with their peers, their teachers and the other adults who are in the classroom or other learning space with them.

The value of in-person, face-to-face, non-screen-based learning experiences has been absolutely underscored by the episodes of lockdown and school closure. Whilst technology in learning very much has a place within the curriculum, it very much should be kept in its appropriate place as determined by teachers' judgement in matching learning objectives with methodologies and equipment.

A lack of such alignment is evident in SNSAs. The EIS is not in favour of SNSAs and believes them to be of little educational value. That they are administered by computer is just one of the reasons for the EIS's objection to these assessments. We believe this method to be somewhat dehumanising of learners and disrespectful of teachers' professional judgement. Teachers can assess young people's learning more reliably across the range of skills that should be assessed within the BGE without reliance on computer-generated assessment that lacks the balance and nuance of teacher professional judgement.

In relation to the assessment of Literacy, SNSAs are incapable of assessing Writing, having capacity only to assess spelling, grammar and punctuation- a reductionist selection of the most basic of writing skills. In opting for such digitally-based assessment of Literacy, the Scottish Government has allowed its chosen assessment method to displace what should be assessment purpose, and teacher professional judgement of both. A return to a sampling approach such as that featured within the SSLN and advised by the OECD would go some way to restoring the role of teacher professional judgement in aligning assessment to learning and teaching.

Whilst the EIS recognises the value of digital question papers for many young people with additional support needs when they are sitting SQA exams/ assessments, for many, particularly those with certain emotional needs, human readers and scribes are more effective supports. Over the past decade or so, however, with growing numbers of young people presenting with additional needs and a growing number of applications for Additional Assessment Arrangements, and a reduction in the number of staff available to support this volume of need, digital question papers as a

default have been encouraged in lieu of human readers and scribes. The EIS is clear that the type of support that is put in place for individual young people should be matched entirely to the type of need rather than being driven by resourcing constraints.

Finally, in considering further enhancements of the role of technology within the curriculum and assessment approaches, it is essential that there is sensitivity to the stark inequalities that exist with regards to families' and therefore students' digital access and literacy. Unequal access to devices, broadband and personal data, and power supply in homes, between those who are most and least disadvantaged, if not tackled, will further widen the poverty-related achievement and attainment gap.

7. Please share any additional comments you have on curriculum and assessment.

The current misalignment of curriculum and assessment, beginning within the BGE and worsening within the senior phase, is undermining the capacity of CfE to make gains towards greater equity of outcome for learners.

To counteract this, teacher judgement supported by collaboration with colleagues, must be much more influential in determining the nature and timing of assessment to suit the needs of learners in relation to the curriculum that has been shaped for and with them.

Trust in teacher judgement should underpin a desire to enable the profession to shape the necessary reforms to assessment, especially within the senior phase where this is required urgently. With this in mind, consultation with the profession on a subject area by subject area basis is required to determine future senior phase assessment approaches.

Currently in the senior phase, timetabling, annual presentation patterns and the associated assessment and exam treadmill strangle creativity; and breadth and depth, and often enjoyment of learning, are sacrificed in place of rushed, superficial learning in preparation for exams. The best of the Standard Grade experience has been lost to be replaced by N5 courses in S4 which have had imported within them the pressured experience of the 'Two Term Dash' that has always featured within Higher. The consequence is an even greater reliance on key aspects of learning being done outside of the classroom at home where income-related socio-economic inequalities can much more strongly prevail- for example, through very unequal access to personal tutors and/ or other parental intervention.

Standard Grade, whilst perhaps requiring some reform, had many strengths:

- the longer timescale for completion enabled a better balance of breadth and depth of learning; which
- meant less time pressure in relation to course coverage;
- meaning that most of the course could be completed in school where there could be some levelling of socio-economic and other disadvantage for learners;
- offering scope for greater inclusivity within the associated learning, teaching and assessment;
- featuring less risk of students missing out on awards;
- and resulting in greater equity of experience and thereby outcome.

In exploring alternatives to the current unsatisfactory senior phase experience, consideration should be given to how these valuable elements of Standard Grade might be restored.

EIS members report that in some school communities, parental attitudes towards assessment can be a barrier to progress. There is often huge parental pressure to focus on attainment at the expense of other purposes of education and the overall quality of the learning experience. Schools and local authorities continue to be reactive to this and to varying degrees, the learning experiences of young people can be diminished overall as a result. This would suggest that there is more work to be done nationally and locally to bring and keep parents as a cohort on board with the mission of CfE.

A resounding message from EIS members is that the focus within the senior phase needs to be on learning first, then on qualifications rather than a narrow and primary focus on exams. Whilst some young people might respond well to and benefit from the exams context, as events they are given too much prominence, and for many other young people, they are a source of anxiety and an assessment scenario that does not enable them to best demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

EIS members also observe that the focus on exam-based assessment undermines the value of qualifications that do not feature exams, and therefore undervalues the achievements of the young people who obtain those qualifications that feature internal assessment.

A further consequence of the disproportionate value that is currently placed upon exams is young people being pressured into doing courses within which exams feature as the assessment approach, and which therefore carry higher status, but which are unmatched to their interests.

Furthermore, the system as set up currently, encourages competition between schools and local authorities on the basis of results- largely in relation to exam-based qualifications- this ultimately having a negative impact on learners' experiences.

Although EIS members can see many shortcomings within the current exam-based system of assessment within the senior phase, they are also clear that a shift towards more internal continuous assessment is likely to incur a workload impact that would require additional staffing resource to manage.

In any case, simply altering the nature of assessment will not address the issues relating to lack of breadth and depth of learning- timetabling and curriculum architecture must also be adjusted to enable the realisation of the aims of CfE in this respect.

Turning to Further Education, EIS-FELA members whilst rejecting the extension of high-stakes assessment, have also cautioned against any move to replicate the competence-based assessment model within many SQA certificated courses in Further Education, which is heavily onerous and has led to over-assessment of students at the expense of breadth and depth of learning within CfE, and is incurring of significant workload pressures for both lecturers and students.

EIS-FELA is also of the view that the professional judgement of lecturers, based on evidence gathered throughout the course, must be enhanced to reduce the assessment burden, this requiring increased professional trust in and enhanced levels of professional autonomy for, lecturers.

Section 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

8.1. There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie.

Please select from dropdown

Disagree

8.2. Please indicate where you think the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence should lie.

Strategic direction should be agreed through strong collaboration and partnership between the teaching profession and government, local authorities and academics, involving the views of learners, parents and the wider community, ensuring that the voices of under-represented groups are included.

The Scottish Education Council could be rebalanced to enable such collaboration and partnership working.

Care must be taken to ensure that the Scottish Government Learning Directorate does not exert undue influence over the process of setting strategic direction. Any direction should be articulated in the broadest of terms, with school communities having autonomy to determine their own strategic direction within the parameters discussed and agreed through collaboration nationally.

Co-ordination of reviews, updates, etc. could be done by the Scottish Government but with teacher voice to the fore in all aspects. For example, within the current review process, it is an error of judgement that teacher voice is largely missing from the Expert Panel. Whilst there is a Secondary HT voice, this is not representative of the class teacher perspective from within any sector. As well as the omission of the class teacher perspective from any sector, ELC, Primary and ASN practitioner voices are completely missing from the Panel. It is critical that teacher voice from all career stages and sectors is involved in shaping the decisions related to the reforms which will fundamentally affect how they go about their work.

Local review and update processes, again featuring teacher voice prominently, should also be established. Any review process has to be manageable for the system and for the teaching profession. The provision of sufficient time for the profession to engage meaningfully in setting strategic direction and in review, is crucial, as understood from past experiences of curriculum and assessment reform. Curricular initiatives are too often imposed on the profession in timescales which do not allow for collaborative approaches or the achievement of practitioner “buy-in”. To achieve this, there should be consultation with the profession regarding the timing of reviews and how best to conduct them in a way that will assist the profession.

9.1. There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues.

Please select from dropdown

Disagree

9.2. Please share which aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers is working well.

Education Scotland

The EIS national body has experienced much good collaboration with Education Scotland colleagues on aspects of professional learning over a

number of years- for example, on Tackling Bureaucracy, Empowerment and more recently on the EIS PACT Project.

Regarding Education Scotland support for practitioners, some EIS members have reported that they have found some curriculum and assessment guidance documentation provided by Education Scotland to have been useful.

Some members have also highlighted that aspects of the professional learning programme offered by Education Scotland have been useful, in particular those in respect of leadership learning.

Members have commented that they consider Education Scotland's communication with the profession about its professional learning offer to have improved during the course of the pandemic, with more information about the professional learning offer being shared directly with schools and teachers rather than being targeted to local authorities for onward distribution.

SQA

EIS members have found much of the Understanding Standards material and related professional learning provided by the SQA to be useful, and have welcomed the extension of the offering through online webinars, these pre-dating the large scale shift to online engagement brought about by the pandemic.

Members are also positive about the quality of the support that they receive from SQA appointees locally.

9.3. Please indicate where you think greater clarity is needed in relation to the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs / requests for support with curriculum and assessment issues.

Scottish Government Learning Directorate

At the macro level, greater clarity of roles is needed with regards to the Scottish Government Learning Directorate which although staffed by civil servants whose expertise while valuable, is almost exclusively non-education based. Yet the Learning Directorate often determines the needs of the teaching profession and thereby the needs of learners, without consulting fully with and/ or listening to the views of either.

For example, it was announced that SNSAS would be introduced in spite of a large groundswell of opinion within the Education community, including

that of the EIS on behalf of 80% of Scotland's teachers, advising against this.

Similarly, without any consultation with the teaching profession regarding senior phase assessment within session 2021-22, the Scottish Government announced that the planning assumption would be an exam diet.

And most recently, pre-empting the outcome of this Review, the Scottish Government announced that exams would continue to feature within the senior phase assessment in some form.

At the same time, the Scottish Government expounds the rhetoric of school empowerment and teacher agency, and directs Education Scotland to review the extent to which local authorities are upholding and progressing the principles of both.

The role of the Learning Directorate must, therefore, be clarified and made transparent as a feature of any reform.

Education Scotland

Regarding the separation of Education Scotland's scrutiny and support functions, the EIS would question the lack of ambition within such a reform. There is an opportunity to respond to the resounding opinion of the teaching profession and make radical change with regards to how improvement is driven nationally, locally and at school level.

EIS members do not consider inspections to be generally helpful in supporting schools or colleges in relation to curriculum and assessment- or any other aspects of education delivery. Members have reported that advice given in the course of inspection activity is often conflicting and confusing, and is often seen to be out of touch with the identities and priorities of school communities.

Seemingly underpinned by a lack of trust in the teaching profession, amidst the development of the empowered schools agenda, the current inspection model looks to be anachronistic and very out of place.

Finally at the national level, since the inception of National Qualifications, Education Scotland and SQA have each sought to pass responsibility for curriculum and assessment support to the other, leaving a void in many cases.

Gaps in Support for Schools

At the local level, greater clarity is needed on who is performing the support function for schools that was formerly carried out by Learning Teaching Scotland (LTS), the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) and local authority advisory services. Collectively, these organisations

provided curriculum guidance, associated advice on pedagogy, teaching resources and professional learning in support of schools and teachers. There has been a significant erosion in the quality and quantity of such support to the teaching profession since their disbandment.

Whilst Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) were heralded as an outcome of the 2018 Governance Review to be the solution to the problem, the benefits that some RICs have brought have not been universally felt across the country. Another kind of postcode lottery has developed.

To a large extent, the gaps are being filled by commercial enterprises- for example, websites providing teaching resources and which require paid subscription, often funded by teachers themselves. Not only should such creeping commercialisation of public education be resisted in principle, the quality of some of the resources purchased is poor and teachers can be open to criticism for using them.

The profession needs to have access to teaching materials and associated advice that are reliable and trustworthy, as characterised the support previously provided by local authority advisory services, LTS and the SCCC.

This material needs to be provided in a timely fashion, with support agencies retuned in and responsive to, the needs of the profession, especially in relation to areas of the curriculum that might carry some sensitivity and where teachers might lack confidence- for example, with regards to certain equality areas.

10.1. There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners.

Please select from
dropdown

10.2. Please share any comments you may have on support for leadership and professional learning.

EIS members have reported that routes to access professional learning across a range of subject areas, including leadership, provided by Education Scotland, are becoming clearer, and suggest that to some extent, this has been helped by the shift towards more online activity over the course of the pandemic.

That said, there remains room for improvement regarding the flow and accessibility of relevant information to class teachers. The Education Scotland website remains challenging for many to navigate so it is therefore time-consuming to locate certain information and time is a resource that is in short supply in schools.

EIS members who teach certain subjects, for example, practical subjects such as Design and Technology, have highlighted that there are gaps in the provision of professional learning activities and material relevant to learning, teaching and assessment within their subject area.

Our members have also highlighted that Education Scotland's professional learning offer has been light on input regarding curriculum making which was identified by the Priestley report as a fundamental requirement for the success of CfE.

Prior to the Governance Review of Scottish Education, SCEL as an organisation was functioning well as a source of leadership-related professional learning. In the view of the EIS, the move to site SCEL within Education Scotland made little sense. Consideration should be given to how the ethos and governance of SCEL might be a model for the new bodies that emerge from the current review process.

11.1. There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making.

Please select from dropdown

Disagree

11.2. Please share any ideas you may have on how trust and decision making can be further improved.

The EIS as Scotland's largest teaching union and professional association is the predominant voice of the teaching profession in Scotland and as such is invited to be part of and plays an active role in, many national working groups across a range of issues affecting Scottish Education.

Although involved in many of the groups that the Scottish Government sets up with the declared intention of aiding its decision-making, experience has shown that the extent to which the views of teachers as represented by the EIS are taken on board, is often dependent on the resource implications, such as in relation to the creation of new Career Pathways and on work associated with additional support needs provision. The extent to which views are taken on board is also dependent on political expediency- such as the introduction of SNSAs; the handling of Covid safety in schools; and the recent announcement of the recommencement of scrutiny activity amidst an ongoing pandemic yet rhetoric around empowerment and the centrality of teacher wellbeing to the recovery agenda.

The handling of the latter examples has landed significant dents in the trust of the teaching profession in the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

The reputation of the SQA amongst the teaching profession is in tatters as a result of the organisation's handling of the national qualifications since their inception; and, more recently, the use of an algorithm to overturn teacher professional judgements, impacting most negatively on young people from the poorest backgrounds, and the attempt to shift responsibility for the handling of appeals to teachers and schools in the midst of already crippling workload associated with delivery of the Alternative Certification Model within a significantly truncated timescale.

With this in mind, the EIS is clear of the need for new, more inclusive and diverse, more transparent models of governance that are underpinned by a genuine commitment to partnership which strongly features teacher voice. Scottish Government and national agencies need to demonstrate **how** they listen to the teaching profession rather than simply inviting representatives to be on working groups and advisory boards in order to make it appear that they listen.

Governance arrangements and dynamics need to shift in order that teacher representatives such as the EIS are not merely consulted on an end product, a de facto decision, but must be set to ensure that the teacher voice that the EIS represents is listened to, trusted and is at the heart of the decision-making process from start to finish.

In addition to meaningful involvement in decision-making processes, the EIS would highlight the necessity of greater honesty from Scottish Government about resource availability in relation to the many workstreams that are underway. For example, there is a wealth of evidence pointing to the fact that additional support needs provision is chronically under-resourced; yet there is a lack of honesty from the Scottish Government about this as evidenced by its setting of the parameters of the Morgan Review of ASL to exclude resourcing. The balance of the

recommendations focuses on teacher education and development, which while important, is not the reason why many young people's additional support needs are not being met. That the ASL Review largely ignored the critical issue of resources has been met with disappointment, anger and cynicism of EIS members who struggle in classrooms every day with growing incidence and complexity of additional support needs, with fewer and fewer resources with which to respond.

Real rather than lip-service partnership founded on honesty can happen now to help build the trust of the teaching profession in national agencies. For the longer-term, consideration needs to be given as to how Education will be protected from petty party politics. We do children, young people and teachers a disservice if we lurch from one policy position to another dependent on vote-hungry manifesto promises, the outcome of elections and the winners and losers of subsequent parliamentary sparring.

Towards achieving a better future for Scottish Education, and therefore enhancing the experiences and outcomes of children and young people, decision-making needs to emerge from strong collaboration, partnership and mutual trust between those who research the evidence on which education policy should be based (rather than on political whim or expediency), those who formulate the policy, and the teachers and other education professionals who enact it.

12.1. Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity.

Please select from dropdown

Strongly Disagree

12.2. Please give examples of how you would like to see scrutiny and evaluation being carried out in future.

The EIS believes that the scrutiny model currently in place is misaligned with the empowerment agenda and, in spite of efforts otherwise, continues to be bureaucracy-heavy and morale-draining for many within the profession, and in many cases, for learners and their families as members of school communities.

Many EIS members find the language of HGIOS to be removed from their experiences as practitioners, with the result that the documentation lacks relevance, meaning and impact in supporting practice.

The bald system of scoring fosters an ethos of competition and fear of failure, rather than of confidence and collaboration; and encourages

misinformed critique of how schools and other education establishments are going about their work.

In the very near future, the EIS would wish to see the emergence from co-creation, of a model of practitioner-led evaluation that features professional collaboration and learning across settings, with time invested to facilitate collaborative processes, to enable reflection on the outcomes of such collaboration, and to support any change processes that are required.

Such a model would be founded on the premise that trust in teacher professional judgement extends to the improvement agenda, also, and that teachers as inhabitants of school communities are best-placed to work with learners, parents and other stakeholders within their communities, and colleagues outwith, to determine priorities and the best means of achieving associated objectives. Where they judge it necessary, schools should be able to seek assistance in going about their work from the relevant national agencies.

13. Please share any additional comments on roles and responsibilities in Scotland's education system.

The roles and responsibilities of key national agencies and the remits of staff who work within them are too often created and shaped on the basis of a lack of professional trust in teachers. This needs to change.

In any reframing of roles and responsibilities as an outcome of this Review process, there must be clear and consistent alignment with the principles of school empowerment, collegiate decision-making and teacher agency, otherwise what we will be left with is empty rhetoric and wasted efforts.

Time and resources are essential to enable all within Education to carry out their roles and responsibilities well and with a collegiate approach.

A 'command and control' approach funded by insufficient Education budgets will not enable the teaching profession or the national agencies who should be working to support it, to deliver on the ambitions of CfE: additional investment in time and resources are critical for its future progress.

Section 4 - Replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority and reforming Education Scotland

14. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example what form should this agency take)

SQA Replacement

Teacher voice must be central to the formation of a replacement qualifications body. It is essential that governance arrangements are configured to avoid the tone deafness to its needs that the teaching profession has experienced from the SQA over a long number of years.

The SQA has largely functioned in a top-down, self-serving way, failing to listen to and respond to the needs of the profession who seek to support learners day to day to achieve the qualifications that the SQA offers.

The organisation's record on meeting its responsibilities arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty must also be taken into account in shaping future change for the better.

Increasingly the SQA has sought inappropriately to exert an influence over the business of learning and teaching, assuming an expertise that they do not have, this particularly in relation to the alternative certification contingencies that have been required during the pandemic.

The power dynamic which has enabled the SQA to wield such unfettered control over the senior phase curriculum and over teacher workload must be quashed, not to be repeated.

For these reasons, and in the spirit of empowerment and genuine partnership, the EIS would wish to see the governance arrangements of the new body as being similar to those of the GTCS, featuring the direct involvement of teachers in the decision-making, through democratic process, thereby delivering accountability to the teaching profession.

EIS members have found SQA appointees- those who are also teachers- to be supportive and helpful. Members have reported that

in many instances, SQA staff such as qualification managers have been less accessible to and supportive of, them as professionals.

This marked difference in the quality of engagement with SQA personnel according to their roles and experience should be informative in configuring the new body.

In shaping the new body, it will be very important for all to recognise and bear in mind the deep distrust that the profession holds towards the SQA. The actions of the SQA have inflicted significant damage upon its relationship with the teaching profession which now largely views the organisation with cynicism and suspicion.

Any new body must be capable of addressing the collision that there currently is between the ethics of the BGE and the senior phase, whether they have combined responsibility for curriculum and assessment or not. If single-responsibility agencies, they must work together collaboratively with others towards meeting this essential objective.

Furthermore, whichever new body has responsibility for assessment, it must be understood that different approaches to assessment will be required depending on the nature of the subject and whether skills or content based.

For example, continuous assessment in the senior phase lends itself better to subjects within which learning is more knowledge-based and compartmentalised. Such assessments can be completed at any point within the course delivery when the requisite learning has been overtaken.

Skills-based subjects often require the scheduling of activities that assess the integration of skills much later in - even towards the very end of- the course. The new body which has responsibility for assessment must be clear that one size does not fit all when it comes to appropriate assessment approaches.

From the outset, the new body must be committed to ensuring much more effective communication with the teaching profession. For some time, SQA communication has been poor on a number of fronts- often unclear, sometimes contradictory, lacking in transparency, difficult to source, and unwieldy in its volume when accessed. This is a barrier to the smooth delivery of courses for learners and adds considerably to the workload of teachers.

Similarly, the excessive bureaucracy that has been baked into SQA processes, largely underpinned by a lack of trust in the teaching profession, must be stripped out and processes appropriately streamlined.

Reform of Education Scotland

In reflecting on the imminent reform of Education Scotland, EIS members have cited the need for a return to the quality of support provided by formerly by Learning Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum.

From such reflections, a view has emerged that the new agency should be staffed in large part by qualified and experienced teachers- on a permanent and seconded basis- who develop good quality curriculum support and resources to be shared with colleagues in schools and other educational establishments.

In terms of governance, concerns about the lack of independence from government need to be addressed. Too often, it can seem that Education Scotland is tasked with carrying out the political bidding of the Scottish Government.

For example, with the introduction of SNSAs, there seemingly was little challenge from Education Scotland to what most of the Education community understood to be a retrograde move. More recently, Education Scotland has been directed by Scottish Government, rather than providing direct support to schools in the course of the pandemic, to carry out local authority reviews related to Covid response measures such as remote learning and ACM implementation, as a means of providing the Scottish Government with data with which to seek to rebut political challenge.

Even the recent publication of Anti Racist Education resources, although welcome, was the consequence of political direction following from Black Lives Matter pressure on the government; when the EIS on behalf of the teaching profession had repeatedly requested such resources over a number of years previously, the response from Education Scotland was that it was not its role to create teaching resources.

The EIS would therefore wish to see governance arrangements that enable the next iteration of Education Scotland to have an appropriate degree of independence from government such that it

will be better able to respond appropriately to the needs of the teaching profession.

As referenced in response to an earlier question, the EIS wishes to see a complete re-think of system-wide evaluation towards one that leads to a model that is shaped and led by the teaching profession. To reiterate, inspection is arguably outdated as a model for improvement in the context of empowerment, and is most commonly described by EIS members as a disempowering experience, which frequently fails to get to the heart of a school's endeavour to serve the needs of its community. It is costly in terms of time and resource yet is of very limited value in supporting accurate self-evaluation and informing professional practice.

- b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example the development of a new national approach to inspection including alignment with other scrutiny functions)

The EIS believes that separation of Education Scotland's scrutiny and support functions should enable Education Scotland to concentrate more fully on supporting schools and colleges in relation to learning, teaching and assessment- indeed all matters relating to the curriculum, including professional learning.

A significant shift in thinking with regards to scrutiny, inspection and evaluation, coupled with significantly enhanced support to the profession could support real growth in the professionalism of and professional trust in, teachers.

Such a rethink would also support a sharper system-wide focus on what matters within the curriculum and young people's educational experiences. A system that supports improvement through growing professional collaboration, trust and confidence- in the real spirit of empowerment- is one likely to lead to lessened scrutiny-related bureaucracy and greater creativity- a key facet of CfE design.

Based on our members', including senior leader members', feedback regarding their experiences of inspection, the EIS believes that a shift to a new model of evaluation of the kind suggested would also help improve the wellbeing of teachers, leading to better learning experiences and associated outcomes for children and young people.

- c) the risks associated with any reform (for example whether the independence of the inspectorate could be jeopardised by change)

There is a risk that a lack of political and system-level commitment to change could result in the same leadership and philosophy within any new organisations created from the reform process, and, at best, a repeat of the same mistakes.

A commonly recurring error committed by government and key national agencies is to introduce change that has significant implications for the professionalism and working lives of teachers, in a top-down manner.

- d) how any risks might be mitigated

The voice of the teaching profession must be at the core of any changes to come.

Before looking to progress the outcomes of this Review, a clear vision for Scottish Education has to be set, in full consultation and partnership with the teaching profession.

Aligned to this vision, there need to be clear purposes agreed and set for the organisations that will support the delivery of Scottish Education on behalf of Scotland's citizens. Again, the role of the teaching profession in such organisational mission-setting will be critical.

The configuration of appropriate governance arrangements as previously outlined should flow from this process.

Thereafter, careful recruitment/deployment of staff with the appropriate values, skills and experience, to carefully defined roles that are aligned to the overarching vision, will be essential. The teaching profession should be involved in recruitment of key posts. Recruitment panels and any staff involved in any critical aspect of the recruitment process should be trained in equality and diversity in recruitment before any associated process begins.

Once established, new bodies should work in close ongoing collaboration and partnership with the teaching profession, members of which should also be involved in organisational governance.

e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

Vision-setting and subsequent governance arrangements could be addressed very quickly following the conclusion of this Review, with a view to the teaching profession having oversight of and a key role in, shaping change.

Thereafter key dates should be set according to the purposes and objectives which flow from the vision, and which should comprise the change strategy. The EIS would wish to see progress towards the realisation of the strategy as soon as is practicably possible without causing any disadvantage to learners or widening of the gaps in the support available to schools.

15. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on how the functions currently housed in Education Scotland could be reformed.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

a) the approach this reform should take (for example which functions should continue to sit within a reformed Education Scotland and are there any functions which could be carried out elsewhere)

Please see answers to the relevant questions above.

b) the opportunities reform could present (for example should more prominence be given to aspects of Education Scotland's role)

Please see answers to the relevant questions above.

c) the risks associated with any reform (for example disruption of service to education establishments and settings)

The main risks that the EIS would highlight in this regard are:

- **Lack of political agreement about what any reform should look like**, leading to more political footballing, the objectives of which do not serve the needs of learners or the teaching profession.
- **The potential for too slow a pace of change**. Many of the issues being addressed within this review are inter-related with other critical issues around resourcing- for example, large class

sizes, excessive class contact time, lack of ASN support, assessment overload and associated teacher workload- and are impacting negatively every day on the learning experiences of young people who attend our schools and colleges now, and on the retention rates within the teaching profession. The longer it takes to introduce change for the better, the more damage will be done.

- **The potential for too fast a pace of change.** There can be a temptation among politicians to wish to be seen to act quickly and decisively and to rush through reform without proper consultation with or involvement by those who will be impacted by it. This has happened repeatedly to the teaching profession over the years- for example, in relation to the introduction of the new national qualifications.
- **Misalignment of the nature of the reform with the key ambitions.** The scale and the spirit of the change need to match the ambitions of CfE, be aligned with the empowerment agenda, be underpinned by a solid commitment, in addition to equity for learners, to equality for all.
- **Insufficient resourcing to enable appropriate reform.** Several responses to previous questions have outlined the EIS view on this.
- **Ineffective communication related to change.** There is a risk of communication around change causing confusion among teachers, learners, parents and the wider public.

All of these elements could result in further voids emerging in terms of support to the profession which is, regardless of what is going on at the macro level, responsible for the day-to-day provision in schools and other education establishments, of education to children and young people.

d) how any risks might be mitigated

Risks can be mitigated through:

- A clear and compelling vision for Scottish education co-created, agreed and protected from cyclical electioneering and daily party politics.
- Sufficient resourcing.
- Effective governance of and relationships between, the organisations that will have a role in enacting reform.

- Careful recruitment/deployment of staff to key national agencies and roles.

e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

As outlined above.

16. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example could a function be carried out elsewhere)

So far there has been lack of specificity regarding the announcement of the intention to create a single body with combined responsibility for curriculum and assessment, which makes it difficult to comment specifically on purpose, role, remit and governance.

The merging of Education Scotland's non-scrutiny function and the SQA is unlikely to inspire trust among teachers for reasons outlined previously within this submission.

- b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example should more prominence be given to an aspect of SQA's role)

As referenced elsewhere above, such reform could facilitate a new model of assessment which is compatible with the aspirations of CfE, it featuring less exposure to formal assessment and more formative assessment that supports learning, as well as an enhanced role for teacher professional judgement. In so doing, such a model would better and more equitably serve the needs of all of Scotland's learners.

As also previously highlighted, there would be the opportunity to establish appropriate partnership working between the teaching profession and whatever emerges as the national body that should serve its needs with regards to assessment.

If framed appropriately, we could see the removal of SQA's anachronistic influence over the nature of assessment and senior phase curriculum design; and a reduction of SQA-related workload,

much of which diverts valuable time away from learning and teaching.

c) the risks associated with any reform (for example loss of income, confusion as to system of awards in Scotland)

Given the longstanding reliance on examinations as the main means of assessing the learning of students undertaking qualifications within their Secondary education, and the anxiety and reluctance of many at the prospect of alternatives, there could be a lack of confidence in/confusion around an assessment model that did not feature examinations as the course assessment.

d) how any risks might be mitigated

Such risks could be mitigated by clear, well-timed communications at all stages of the reform process, beginning with meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders throughout the change process.

In this context, it would be crucial for the teaching profession to have clarity on any changes in good time to aid planning and to enable teachers and schools to assist in communicating the details of changes to learners and parents. What should not happen as has occurred on many occasions recently with regards to Covid mitigations and details of the Alternative Certification Model, is that the teaching profession receives key pieces of information simultaneous to or even after parents and learners, and often via social media. Such mistiming of comms does not facilitate smooth management of change at establishment level (and is professionally discourteous).

e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place

As previously outlined, the EIS believes that there requires to be an appropriate balance struck with regards to the speed of reform. We wish to see change as soon as possible since existing senior phase curriculum architecture and over-reliance on high-stakes exam-based assessment approaches, coupled with the impact of SQA influence, are currently damaging to the quality of young people's learning experiences, to the mental health of many students, to equity outcomes and to teacher health and wellbeing. Against such a backdrop the need for change is pressing.

At the same time, it will be important that it is timed in such a way as to ensure that teachers can be properly prepared for it and that learners will not be disadvantaged with regards to their learning and achievement of qualifications.

With this in mind, priorities could be staged in such a way as to tackle first the problems that arise from the prevailing timetabling and curriculum architecture models that continue to diminish young people's senior phase experiences.

A move to two-year exit qualifications in S5 for the vast majority of students- circa 90%- who would be in school to undertake them at this point, would be achievable very quickly.