DATA LABEL: PUBLIC

West Lothian Council

EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

EDUCATION REFORM CONSULTATION

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (SECONDARY)

A.   PURPOSE OF REPORT

To invite Education Executive to consider and approve of the draft response to the Education Reform Consultation, included as Appendix 1 to this report.

B.   RECOMMENDATION

To approve the draft response to the Education Reform Consultation included as Appendix 1 to this report.

C.   SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	**Council Values**	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	**Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)**	The proposed new national framework will provide the context within which West Lothian Council exercises its legal duties and applies its policies. No environmental, equality, health or risk issues for the council have been identified.
III	**Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers**	None
IV	**Impact on performance and performance Indicators**	None
V	**Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement**	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed We are better educated and have access to increased and better quality learning and employment opportunities
VI	**Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)**	None

| VII | Consideration at PDSP | Not possible due to timescale for response to be produced. |
| VIII | Other consultations | Headteachers in the Primary, Secondary and ASN sectors; Association of Directors of Education Scotland |

D.   TERMS OF REPORT

D1   Background Context

In 2020, the Scottish Government invited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to assess the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), to understand how curricula are designed and implemented in schools, and to identify what can be improved so that CfE will deliver quality learning for all students now and in future. This task was undertaken by the OECD Implementing Education Policies team, which conducts comparative analysis of education policy implementation and offers tailored support to help countries in the design and effective implementation of their education policies.

The OECD has examined and reported on both the Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase, and published two reports on aspects of Scottish Education.

The first, *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future,* was published in June 2021. This report recognises that Curriculum for Excellence offers an inspiring and widely supported philosophy of education. It acknowledges the hard work done over the years by many in Scottish education to turn the vision for Curriculum for Excellence into meaningful learning for children and young people at all stages. *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* highlights the need for a more structured and strategic approach to curriculum review and implementation in Scotland, noting in particular that the structure, learning practices and assessment approaches in the Senior Phase need adapting to be consistent with Curriculum for Excellence's vision to allow for a smooth curriculum experience from 3 to 18 and beyond.

The second OECD report, *Upper-Secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A Comparative Perspective*, was published in August 2021. This report was written to complement the first OECD report and sets out a number of possible ways in which improvements could be made to the alignment between Curriculum for Excellence and assessment in the Senior Phase.

In response to the first OECD report *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*, the Scottish Government took the decision that the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) would be replaced and that the functions of Education Scotland would be reviewed with the removal of the Inspectorate from its remit. Professor Ken Muir, University of West of Scotland, was appointed to act as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government to consider and advise on the implementation of the reform that will consider all functions currently delivered by both SQA and Education Scotland.

The Education Reform Consultation is hosted by the Scottish Government on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, in his role as independent advisor to the Scottish Government on the replacement of the SQA and the reform of Education Scotland. The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of stakeholders to inform recommendations relating to the future shape of Scotland's national education agencies.

The results of the consultation process will be used to inform the work of the Expert Panel and the Practitioner and Stakeholder Advisory Group set up to support the Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government leading on this part of the reform exercise. This will conclude with an independent report by Professor Muir to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in early 2022.

The consultation closes on 26 November 2021. The very short timescale within which Professor Muir will conduct his review has resulted in a short consultation period. It was not possible to present a draft response to PDSP as the importance of the consultation required detailed and thorough consideration within Education Services.

D2   West Lothian Council Draft Response

The consultation is divided into four sections as follows: 1. Vision 2. Curriculum and Assessment 3. Roles and Responsibilities 4. Replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority and reforming Education Scotland.

The draft response has been produced collaboratively by Education Services, taking account of the views of headteachers in the Primary, Secondary and ASN Sectors.   Parents/carers were notified on the consultation, and given the opportunity to respond, in materials circulated by schools. Other partner agencies and council services have the opportunity to provide their views directly via the consultation link.

The draft response sets out strong support for the vision of Curriculum for Excellence, but notes concern that CfE does not currently provide coherent progression from 3-18. The response sets out strong support for the creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency to help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report.

It strongly supports the idea that the full breadth of existing SQA qualifications play an important part of the curriculum offered in secondary schools, but also notes the importance of considering the fullest range of opportunities that could provide an agile curriculum and flexible pathways to grow learner achievements, including SCQF qualifications.

The draft response notes that whilst West Lothian Council has made a strong commitment to promoting and developing technologies to support curriculum, there is still considerable work to be done (nationally and locally) to ensure equity of opportunity and experience, and there is a need for further investments in infrastructure to support the introduction of 1-1 devices if we are to utilise this resource to its full potential

In relation to the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CfE, the draft response sets out the need for national direction but notes that Local Authorities and schools must retain ownership for CfE to ensure autonomy over learning that best suits learners and communities.

The draft response notes a lack of clarity in the role played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues, and makes suggestions on how national agencies could improve.

It strongly supports the idea that independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity. In relation to the other functions of Education Scotland the draft response sets out West Lothian's preference for a distinct differentiation between curriculum design and scrutiny, and also for the reinstatement of a separate body for professional learning.

In relation to the reform of SQA, the response again stresses the importance of SCQF qualifications in opening up opportunities for learners, who would benefit from qualifications from a wide range of qualification and awarding bodies linked to the SCQF. The response supports parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications, providing agile learner pathways and getting it right for every learner.

The full answers appended to this report as Appendix 1 provides evidence, examples and argument to support the draft responses to the questions contained in the Education Reform Consultation.

E.   CONCLUSION

The Education Executive is invited to consider and approve the draft response to the Education Reform Consultation, produced by Education Services in collaboration with Headteachers in the Primary, Secondary and ASN Sectors.

F.   BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Education Reform Consultation Education reform consultation on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to the Scottish Government - Scottish Government - Citizen Space

OECD Report *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future* OECD iLibrary | Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future (oecd-ilibrary.org)

OECD Report OECD iLibrary | Upper-secondary education student assessment in Scotland: A comparative perspective (oecd-ilibrary.org)

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 – Education Reform Consultation – West Lothian Council Response

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Catrina Hatch

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Date of meeting: 16 November 2021

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Section 1 - Vision	
Two decades have passed since the original vision for Curriculum for Excellence was set out. In 2019, a revised narrative on Curriculum for Excellence was published which aimed to update the original vision[12]. Since the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, there have been marked changes in educational research giving rise to new insights into children and young people's learning, pedagogy, and the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes students need to progress as learners. *"Scotland's curriculum – Curriculum for Excellence – helps our children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for life in the 21st century."*	
1.1 The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland ***To what extent do you agree or disagree with the above statement***	
Strongly agree	X
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	
1.2 What do you think should be retained and/or changed?	
We believe that what underpins the CFE vision is still relevant but that the statement above now seems dated and clearly linked to where we were as a society at the beginning of the 21st century. Our world has changed significantly since this statement was written. The word 'help' seems out of kilter with our vision to empower learners and create agency. A more up to date version would look something like: ***Scotland's curriculum – Curriculum for Excellence – enabling all our children to learn and apply skills, develop and use key attributes and gain and demonstrate knowledge for life.*** To support this statement, we believe that the 4 capacities, knowledge, skills and attributes should still be front and centre within any change to CFE and that consideration should be given to updating core elements such as the role of knowledge in CfE and the possibility of defining indicators for progress against the four capacities. Any changes must first and foremost, put young people at the centre and we must create a provision to suit their changing needs. The lens needs to be fully on skills and attributes though, rather than knowledge or content heavy BGE courses that are simply channels to the senior phase. There is tension between the BGE and Senior Phase as there were multiple changes at the same time and CfE became too complicated. What we need is a system that flows better and the timing of the changes needs to be done in a coordinated manner to avoid the focus being taken away from BGE when new SQA changes are announced.	

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Section 2 – Curriculum and Assessment	
The OECD reports *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*[13] and *Upper-Secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A Comparative Perspective*[14] make it clear that aligning curriculum, qualifications and system evaluation is essential to delivering on the commitments made in Curriculum for Excellence relating to assessment. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	
2.1 CFE 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.	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	X
2.2 Please share what you believe currently contributes to a coherent progression	
In WLC, considerable work has been carried out to provide clearer exemplification and frameworks for the curriculum. The work of development officers, schools and working parties have no doubt enhanced coherence and clarified progression at local level, whilst still enabling schools to personalise the curriculum for their learners. Similarly, work on moderation and understanding of achievement of a level has been carried out by LAs to ensure better understanding – with the support, where available, from Education Scotland guidance. However, CfE implementation was a skewed process with the system not fully prepared for the change. When SQA revamped their qualifications, development work shifted immediately to remodelling the senior phase and preparations for new courses. This disjoint between the BGE and Senior Phase remains. In many schools the BGE still offers a broad and quite traditional curriculum but as has been recognised nationally often lacking pace and challenge. Schools have had to focus on the everchanging needs and demands of the Senior phase as that is where the accountability lies. It would also appear that practitioners are more skilled in sharing pastoral transition data and ensuring that staff are well versed on the needs of the students but passing on the key curriculum transition data is not as confidently done often due to lack of clarity within the system and levels. Due to the numerous changes to reporting levels: Es and Os, SALs followed by Benchmarks it became even more challenging for staff to pass on the "right" or expected information. This confusion is also evident within the parent body who are confused at times about progression or achievement of a level due to the many different versions over the years and the fact that it can take a number of years for a young person to achieve a level in some areas. That said, there have been improvements in the transition of Literacy, numeracy and wellbeing in recent years with staff having a clearer understanding of achievement of a level in these key areas.	
2.3 Please share any ideas you may have to improve learner progression across stages and sectors	
There are really good examples of where schools have been innovative in their approach to the BGE but questions remain re. the coherence and progression of all learners into the Senior Phase. It is important moving forward the curriculum is approached holistically, with a clear purpose and a qualification and assessment system that aligns with the purposes.	

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Practitioners would benefit from having increased knowledge across the sectors, for example secondary staff knowing and understanding how to teach the foundations of their subject area from a primary perspective and primary staff seeing the progression of the subject and skills required within the secondary curriculum. There should be genuine capacity to work between the sectors and a pilot scheme could be introduced to support this with secondary staff working within the primary sector for a block of time and also ITE incorporating this cross-sector need.

The primary curriculum and courses within the BGE are currently too content driven, and this poses challenges for depth of learning. Young people would benefit from stripping back the content and focussing on building skills for progression. The ideal is an aligned curriculum model supported by a clear skills and progression framework where primary and secondary staff plan and assess together.

Involvement of young people in the co creation of learner journeys should be included in any review – what can we learn from their experiences?

A new curriculum should allow for increased opportunities for flexibility, to allow progression and a more frequent modular approach – 10-week units as an example rather than full year courses. This supports personalisation and choice and opens up truly flexible pathways to support positive destinations

3.1 In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by CFE to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	X
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	
3.2 Please share ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance this in the future	

Ensure purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement is key – system leadership at national and local level needs to ensure ongoing involvement with all stakeholders, especially learners. This should include a structured offer of engagement initiatives from ES to best inform curriculum design and a clear clarification on the purpose and vision for curriculum expectations.

There is a real need for high quality CLPL if we are to make the necessary advances. There is a willingness to work collaboratively but in order to do so effectively we need to build staff capacity; this was missing when CFE was first introduced. Time needs to be built in for staff to plan and prepare for the changes, practitioners need to be enthused by the changes and see the opportunity to be creative in their schools without too many constraints and with a representative amount of time for the large task ahead.

As mentioned previously we believe that decluttering the curriculum from 3-18 would provide the necessary time to be creative, making sure that the curriculum aligns with our aspirations for GIRFEC. To enhance progression and support flexible pathways then we must also ensure that there is parity of esteem for all courses and that the data we collect and analyse to gauge the success of a school takes all of this into account.

4.1 The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report	
Strongly agree	X

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Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	

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

This would provide a coherent communication strategy to support future developments of CfE that provides meaningful collaboration with all stakeholders. Any new agency must be grounded/owned by the people it is for – learners, parents and teachers. The agency must be aligned to existing systems and networks such as RICs.
The personnel leading the agency must be seen to be the best of the best if they are to have credibility amongst the profession. There is an opportunity for collaborative working across the country if there were dedicated staff who spent some time in their own school/authority and some time working for the Agency. These practitioners are credible as they still have an understanding of what is current within a school setting but could also drive system level change for the Agency.

The creation of an agency responsible for assessment could be advantageous in creating a far more inclusive assessment model. Learners who would have only achieved National 3 level awards due to high anxiety and stress inhibiting learning, achieved much more in the ACM as the approach was inclusive. We must do all we can to develop a model that allows for all learners to be treated fairly and to achieve their potential regardless of their barriers. Aspects of the ACM model could be maintained for learners with high anxiety and a range of learning needs who for them, sitting a summative exam is challenging.

At present SQA don't drive the entire curriculum as they only look at senior phase. The development of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency would support improvements in the cohesion from BGE to Senior Phase. Perhaps though, there needs to be cognisance given to learning and teaching as part of the remit as surely how we teach is as important as what we teach and how we assess it, and assessment is an integral element of learning and teaching.
There should also be consideration given to developing a systematic approach to curriculum review, led by such an agency.

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

Such an agency should be independent of existing models, particularly scrutiny, to ensure a breadth, depth and coherence in its ability to support curriculum design. It also must be designed with 21st century needs at it is heart, including creativity. Such an agency must also be seen as an advisory organisation, not one of additional demands on schools and LAs. With this in mind, it should not solely come from existing education Scotland or Scottish Government bodies and would benefit from a wider membership, including experienced and knowledgeable practitioners.

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

Strongly agree	X
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	

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Strongly Disagree	

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
Although the range of SQA qualifications play an important part of the secondary curriculum, it would be remiss of us to fail to mention SCQF in this section. Providing an agile curriculum and flexible pathways to grow learner achievements means that we must consider the fullest range of opportunities that could form part of our curricula.   SQA Nationals and Highers remain the main qualifications offered in schools but we need to review SQA qualifications to ensure that there is recognition of skills achievements as well as academic achievements. The range of SCQF rated awards at levels 3-7 across all providers afford significant opportunity for positive change. Nationally, the data used to judge success comes from Insight and through Education Scotland inspections and the recognition of these courses is not similarly weighted. There is an opportunity with this reform to change that narrative.   There are also issues with the current administrative systems at SQA and creating more bespoke packages for young people is challenging. IT systems need to be introduced to make it easier to link units and courses and create group awards to support schools and learners   One concern about a broader range of SQA qualifications is the moderation and support for the staff teaching the new courses. Will there be sufficient expertise within the profession to support this introduction of a broader range of qualifications?

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
Opening up the senior phase to the fullest range of accredited qualifications possible – all providers – rated against the SCQF framework.   Greater freedom to teach qualifications which match to learner journeys and aspirations with real pathways into positive destinations. To do this we need to take into account Labour Market Intelligence and ensure that the courses we are offering are building skills for the future and are not just more content heavy courses reliant on high stakes final assessments. It would be beneficial to make greater use of staff who do not necessarily have a background in teaching, but have practical skills, for example in finance or construction, to support teachers in delivering the curriculum and in particular skills-based qualifications which lead to positive destinations.   Partnerships are becoming increasingly important in getting it right for our young people and we need to have a real focus on working with industry to co-design qualifications to support the needs of the future workforce. Whilst we are acutely aware that a school's main objective is not creating the next labour force we must provide our young people with the skills for learning, life and work.   As mentioned in the previous section, if we are creating pathways that get it right for that young person then we need to address the data that is valued. Insight must be reflective of attainment and achievement and we must step away from the narrow measurements of SQA breadth and depth and avoid league tables. All stakeholders must be given the opportunity to see the value in the variety of curricular pathways and we need to use the media and all communication streams to support showcasing what is on offer.   Lastly, if we are investing in a wider range of qualifications and providers, we also need to look at accessibility and how we support all learners to engage in qualifications from a variety of platforms. Online options should be invested in to ensure equity.

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6.1 Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	X
Strongly Disagree	
6.2 Please share any comments you may have in the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessments, and what could be done to deliver improvements	

Whilst WLC has made a strong commitment to promoting and developing technologies to support curriculum, there is still considerable work to be done (nationally and locally) to ensure equity of opportunity and experience. There is a need for further investments in infrastructure to support the introduction of 1-1 devices if we are to utilise this resource to its full potential.

We are not yet completely utilising digital technologies to develop a fully inclusive curriculum and assessment model. At present students have the opportunity to access digital technologies within a classroom environment but are then unable to use the same resource in an exam setting, this can be detrimental to the outcome for that student. Significant expansion is required on digital assessment approaches and the need for students to be able to complete final assessments or ongoing assessments on a digital platform would be welcomed, SOLAR was a good starting point for this but hasn't progressed as quickly as is needed.

We also need to move to a model of co-creation of courses with partners and providers allowing for flexibility on how they are delivered with digital technology at the heart and flexible approaches to assessment. We must fully embrace virtual learning and ensuring an equitable offer for all learners. We have seen learners with a variety of learning needs thrive with online learning during the lockdowns. We must not simply resume practice where we were pre-pandemic and ignore this sea change. We should further develop Scotland's virtual learning offer with a full suite of opportunities for all learners. This could also be of benefit to staff looking to become teachers of an additional subject or level, working virtually with a delivering practitioner they can build capacity and become more confident in their own delivery or be accredited to teach an additional course (Psychology etc)

There is a need to exemplify and build on existing good practice, provide quality CLPL and support at a national level for practitioners, clarify expectations for technologies within the curriculum. A national review of guidance and resourcing in moving forward, would be welcomed.

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

Society is no longer assessment based other than in the education system. Information can be found at the click of a button or swipe of a screen so we now need to match the assessment process with the needs of society and progression. Move away from the traditional and embrace the future. There is a job to do to make universities and employers understand the change too.
Ongoing assessments really suited some of our learners who do not do well in a high stakes assessment at the end of year but can manage ongoing assessments or unit type assessments. Teacher professional judgements and aspects of the ACM model from the last two years should be explored as a way forward using more folio, open book and internal based assessments. We need to create a variety/range of assessment opportunities to match the courses they are assessing, making skills-based courses with skills-based assessments and not written papers as an example.

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We need to consider ways of ensuring effective collaboration with clear roles and responsibilities at all levels whilst also consolidating policy processes to ensure clarity and coherence.

If we can develop a robust, national approach to ensuring consistency in assessment then we will see genuinely positive change in the interests of the young people.

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Section 3 – Roles and Responsibilities
The rationale for reform of Scottish education is to ensure that learning communities get the best possible support to provide the highest quality of learning and teaching for our children and young people. The aim is to continue to reduce the attainment gap and reduce variability in outcomes achieved by young people in different parts of the country. *Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future*[17] recognises the complexity in Scottish education and highlights duplication of functions between different groups. It is claimed that this reduces clarity and consistency for practitioners and points to the need for Scotland's system leaders and stakeholders to revise the current allocation of responsibility for Curriculum for Excellence, including responsibilities for its strategic direction, its reviews and updates, and the response to needs and/or requests for support with curriculum issues. A key challenge in improving the transparency of responsibilities and accountability mechanisms surrounding Curriculum for Excellence is in ensuring that the functions of agencies are designed in a way that maximises support for achieving excellence and equity for all children and young people from the early level upwards. Building on a commitment to shared ownership of Curriculum for Excellence, the report therefore points to the need for improved clarity on functions and simplification of guidance for all stakeholders in order that the system is more coherent and more easily understood by all, allowing a greater focus on learning and teaching. **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

8.1 There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CFE lie.	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	X
Strongly Disagree	

8.2 Please indicate where you think the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for CFE should lie.
There needs to be a National direction but Local Authorities and schools must retain ownership for CfE to ensure autonomy over learning that best suits learners and communities. However, schools must also benefit from **clear**, effective guidance and support from a national or regional agency from the onset, to ensure that any curriculum design activity does not become overly bureaucratic or onerous. We believe that there should be representation from all 32 Local Authorities feeding into the system, this could be staffed using part time secondments with the agency. These staff will have the credibility of still knowing what is happening on the ground and engaging at school level at all times. There is also a need to avoid duplication with what is happening at LA level and then through the RIC forum, working with all LAs from the offset could support collegiality and avoid working in silos. Clarity is needed around where support is published, when and what scrutiny it goes through prior to publication. There is a feeling that some practitioners often only found out about publication of documents if they had good networks of colleagues. There is recognition latterly

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that communication has been better, more collaboratively shaped and streamlined information around refreshed narrative and moderation cycle was issued and was well publicised

The scrutiny process would appear to have hampered creativity and pathways to some extent as there is not the same recognition of all learner pathways, this needs to be addressed too from the outset.

9.1 There is clarity in the role played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues.	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	X
Strongly Disagree	

9.2 Please share which aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers is working well.
EDSPLL provide a clear progression pathway and support for leadership development and have evolved effectively from the early work of SCEL. Over the past 18 months, support for schools and LAs from Education Scotland has been more constructive and collaborative and this has been welcomed. However, generally speaking there is an opportunity to re-examine and redefine the role played by national agencies here. We acknowledge that the last 18 months has been challenging not only in schools but in society and that we now need to progress with a new model that shows clear links with what is happening in schools, with good existing leaders who know the pressures of school in the current climate contributing to the system.

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.
If we progress with the creation of a *Curriculum and Assessment Agency then* we also need to interlink this with a Professional Learning Agency of some description from the outset where staff can access resources or support easily. The National Improvement Hub is now cluttered with outdated publications and it can be a challenge to navigate – easier accessible web materials would be welcome. Part of the responsibility needs to be keeping the resources and support materials available to staff current and relevant to the ever-changing requirements in schools and society. Associate inspectors have a significant role to play in supporting curriculum and assessment concerns. As practitioners who are still involved with day-to-day schooling, they can truly influence change, challenge and support. There should be an increase in the number of associate inspectors to widen the opportunities to do so. Recent transparency and support for schools around inspection preparation is welcomed and should be an integral part of the role of scrutiny teams moving forward. There is a significant role for the RIC in co-ordinating and working with national agencies. The full potential of the RICs has not been realised to date. However there remains a significant need for the role of continuous improvement to lie with local authorities who best understand the

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context and needs to their schools to ensure support, challenge and development is matched closely to requirements.

10.1 There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners.	
Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	X
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	

10.2 Please share any comments you may have on support for leadership and professional learning.
SCEL (now part of Education Scotland) made a significant positive contribution to leadership and professional learning in Scotland and there have been a range of good development opportunities for teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders in recent years. There is a feeling that the opportunities do, however, need better promotion and marketing to improve uptake and knowledge of what is available. Also as with the 9.3 above, we need to ensure that the opportunities are relevant and meet the current needs of staff, opportunities need to evolve with the times.
Into Headship, Excellence in Headship and Columba 1400 were all mentioned as excellent and even life changing opportunities for leadership support and professional learning.
The introduction of a professional framework of learning for Support staff was welcomed but there is still a need to provide further training and pathways to empower and raise ambitions of staff in this area.
Also of note, the leadership, communication and collaboration with regards to design of professional learning and leadership is a strength. See also 9.2 above

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

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Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	X
Strongly Disagree	

11.2 Please share any ideas in how trust and decision making can be further improved

There are concerns that the consultation only reaches a small fraction of stakeholders. Surveys do not engage the harder to reach parents/pupils and we need to hear their voices too. Consultation should take a variety of forms depending on the needs of stakeholders. For some it would be better to involve the staff that the students and parents know to facilitate discussion groups or focus groups to gather their views. We should build on local relationships with our communities to develop a truly inclusive curriculum that meets the needs of all.

Surveys are not always fit for purpose and we need to move to better and more up to date methods of gathering feedback using digital solutions.

There is a need to see direct action from the consultation process to avoid it seeming tokenistic and timescales for consultation need to be reflective of the scale of the change.

As part of the consultation process it is also important that there is a clarity of roles, from a national viewpoint and clearer lines of communication of roles and responsibilities in the process.

12.1 Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity	
Strongly agree	X
Agree	
Neither agree/Disagree	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	

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

Scrutiny as a term is not the most appropriate of definitions. Evaluative activities between schools, LAs and any future inspection agency must be guided by transparency and shared ownership that is guided by clear shared visions and the identified needs of a school.

We should continue to evolve the process to be truly collaborative with the school. The best scrutiny processes are done in partnership enabling deeper learning and a greater understanding of improvement actions often from colleagues who are willing to offer challenge but in a supportive way (like the VSE model). The process must evolve from focusing on narrow attainment measures – a more learner centred approach must progress to develop a process that makes our local schools centres of excellence in all our communities across Scotland.

All leaders should be given the experience as associate inspectors, and scrutiny should be about ongoing self-evaluation within the authority.

We would also welcome HMIE professional learning events for school staff on topics related to the scrutiny process such as lesson observation etc

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13. Please share any additional comments on roles and responsibilities in Scotland's education system.
From an inclusion perspective, we would like to see an education system that is built in getting it right for every young person. It should not be competitive in nature but to really promote and encourage collaboration across schools/Clusters/LA's/ RICs for all of Scotland's children. We would like there to be an analysis of the RIC model to see if it is meeting the needs of the practitioners and young people. Some form of a cost benefit analysis would be welcomed. We would also like to see the overall education budget being devolved to authorities.

Section 4 – Replacing SQA and Reforming Education Scotland
The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced in June 2021 the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment while also taking forward reform of Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection or scrutiny from the agency. This section seeks views on how best to take forward key aspects of the Cabinet Secretary's decision including: • **Removing Scrutiny (Inspection and review) from Education Scotland** • **Further reform of Education Scotland** • **Replacing SQA** • **Considering the establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency** While it is expected to take some time to establish new or revised national agencies, it is anticipated that they will have a key role in taking forward delivery of wider OECD recommendations. This would include embedding a refreshed vision for Curriculum for Excellence, defining indicators to understand progress across the four capacities, building curricular capacity, implementing new pedagogical and assessment practices, implementing approaches for internal assessment in determining qualifications, ensuring appropriate breadth and depth of learning through the Broad General Education[18] and in respect of the Senior Phase[19], embedding a structured and long-term approach to implementation, effective stakeholder engagement and coherent communications. To assist you in answering these questions, information on the current roles and functions carried out by SQA and Education Scotland are provided within the supporting documents section. *Removing Scrutiny (Inspection and review) from Education Scotland* External scrutiny (inspection and review) plays a fundamental role in the overall drive to continue to improve education in Scotland for all of our children, young people and adult learners. HM Inspectors carry out independent, external evaluation of standards, quality and improvement with a clear focus on impact and outcomes for learners. The scrutiny programme covers all sectors from early learning and childcare to adult learning, The evidence gathered through observing practice at first hand identifies what is working well in our education system, including examples of highly effective practice, areas which are showing improvement and areas where further development is needed.

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 (e.g., what form should this agency take)*
Whatever approach the reform takes, it must be done with transparency at all stages.

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As mentioned at various points during our response we also believe that there must be serving teachers involved in the planning, development and leading of the agency. It is important that the leaders are not too far removed from what is happening on the ground in our schools if they are to have credibility with practitioners.

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

As mentioned previously we should continue to evolve the process to be truly collaborative with the school. We would welcome the opportunity to include inspectors as part of our own LA self-evaluation activities such as VSEs or moderation activities. This would be beneficial in building capacity at all levels and is CLPL in its true sense.

We would also like to see the timings for inspections devolved back to LAs. Often, they are viewed as a one-off event in a 10-year cycle. If we are to support and empower practitioners to learn and improve from the process then the context needs to change.

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

There is some scepticism about the timing of the reform as there is still a focus on recovery from the pandemic and the fact that schools are still very much dealing with staff and student absences due to Covid 19. There is, however, an understanding that there may not be a "good time" for reform anytime soon so perhaps now is as good a time as any but that stakeholders may require additional support and time to fully engage.

d) How any risks might be mitigated

- Clear, transparent communication
- Genuine engagement with all stakeholders
- Listen to what learners, schools and parents really want and the roles that everyone can play in reform

e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place

We understand that there is a need for the reform and that changes need to take place but we would like it noted that the process should not be rushed. It is imperative for the young people and for the practitioners that an appropriate amount of time is given to the consultation and the subsequent reform to avoid overwhelming stakeholders or causing unrest.

It is also essential that time is given to practitioners to work collaboratively when the reforms are announced. As a profession we have a number of practitioners leaving and we need to support those who remain to work together to ease the burden of more changes especially after the pandemic.

Further Reform of Education Scotland

Beyond inspection Education Scotland is a broad organisation responsible for a range of important functions designed to support a number of parts of the Scottish Education system. These functions include directly supporting learning communities at local and regional levels, offering a wide range of professional learning and leadership development programmes and

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opportunities, Community Learning and Development (including the CLD Standards Council), supporting digital pedagogies and as the function of Registrar of Independent 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 view 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)
We would welcome a distinct differentiation between curriculum design and scrutiny. We would also like to reinstate the separate body for professional learning to enable further partnership.
b) the opportunities reform could present (for example should more prominence be given to aspects of Education Scotland's role)
The reform should not be about the prominence of Education Scotland but needs to focus on better outcomes for young people. The reform needs to have impact on young people but also on practitioners and Education Scotland need to be viewed as a support for teachers. There is an opportunity to reconsider a more dynamic, collaborative modern leadership for education. We could embed more meaningful links with Regional Collaboratives and practitioners within a more supportive and fluid infrastructure whilst reigniting an enthusiasm in the system for everyone through shared ownership of our education system. We have a chance to streamline policy and practice and take the opportunity to highlight what is important in Scottish education.
c) the risks associated with any reform (for example disruption of service to education establishments and settings)
The main risk is not getting it right for our learners by tying up system reform in bureaucracy We also risk losing skilled practitioners from the profession by not involving them meaningfully in change.
d) how any risks might be mitigated
• Clear, transparent communication • Genuine engagement with all stakeholders • Listen to what learners, schools and parents really want and the roles that everyone can play in reform
e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.
The reform, as mentioned above, must begin as soon as possible. The OECD report highlighted issues with the current system and we cannot afford to wait too long before taking action.

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There must be plenty of opportunities for discussion factored in from the beginning of the process, with regular review of successes and a professional bravery to change if it's not working.

Replacing SQA

SQA has two main roles: accreditation and awarding qualifications.

- **SQA Accreditation** accredits qualifications other than degrees and approves and quality assures awarding bodies that plan to enter people for these qualifications.

- **SQA Awarding Body** devises and develops national and vocational qualifications across schools, colleges, training providers and employers; sets standards and maintains such qualifications; validates qualifications (makes sure they are well written and meet the needs of learners and practitioners); reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date; arranges for, assists in, and carries out, the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications; quality-assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications; and issues certificates to candidates.

Within both of these roles, SQA offers a range of services for businesses and training providers, ranging from course and centre approval through customised awards, to endorsement, credit rating and licensing services.

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)

We would welcome greater visibility of SCQF in the system – opening up opportunities across the system to use qualifications from a wide range of qualification and awarding bodies linked to the SCQF. Working with regional colleges to develop and deliver awards pertinent to the local economy and labour market intelligence– all SCQF rated.

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

There is an opportunity to realise parity of esteem between *academic* and *vocational* qualifications. This provides a clearer focus on agile learner pathways and getting it right for every learner.
We have the opportunity to fully realise the potential within an empowered system to enable school leaders to work with their communities to design curricula and assessment models..

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

Significant promotion and marketing of SCQF and any new qualifications will offset these risks along with clearer learner journeys.

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d) how any risks might be mitigated

- Clear, transparent communication
- Genuine engagement with all stakeholders
- Listen to what learners, schools, parents, employers and further and higher education establishments really want

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

The reform must begin as soon as possible. The OECD report highlighted issues with the current system and we cannot afford to wait too long before taking action. The issues faced over the past two years with the high stakes final exam system cannot be ignored and we need to make changes quickly.
As mentioned previously, there must be plenty of opportunities for discussion factored in from the beginning of the process, with regular review of successes and a professional bravery to change if it's not working.

Considering the Establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency
The establishment of new Agency has the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the education sector. It will be important that the remit, purpose, governance and culture of the new agency match the aspirations of the system it will be designed to serve. We are therefore interested in the role of the new agency, its relationship with other parts of the system including the Scottish Ministers and how we will know it has been successful.

17. 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 are there alternative models for this reform?)

Practitioners, parents and young people are key at all stages of the reform, only by listening to them will we see true change. If the Agency is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the education sector, there needs to be appropriate quality CLPL for staff to support this at a national level.

b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example what should the role of the new agency be?)

To develop an assessment system which truly reflects and recognises the skills our young people require, is values by all stakeholders, recognises the importance of professional judgement and is flexible and adaptable in order to meet the needs of all young people.

c) the risks associated with any reform

As mentioned previously, the main risk is not getting it right for our learners by tying up system reform in bureaucracy
We also risk of losing skilled practitioners from the profession by not involving them meaningfully in change.

d) how any risks might be mitigated

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- Clear, transparent communication
- Genuine engagement with all stakeholders
- Listen to what learners, schools, parents, employers and further and higher education establishments really want

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

As mentioned previously we see a need for the reform process to begin quickly, although to take cognisance of the pressures the system has been under and allow full and meaningful consultation to take place. There is considerable anxiety around potential change and timelines and communication will be key to harness potential.