

2.1 Topic: Curriculum for Excellence - Four Capacities

Question 1

a) Should information be gathered across all four capacities? **Yes/No/Unsure**

b) Please consider each of the capacities in turn. What kinds of information should be gathered on learners' progress and achievements in each capacity?

The overriding principle in any review of assessment must be an embedded understanding that education in Scotland is delivered either through the medium of English or through the medium of Gaelic. It is essential that Gaelic medium education (GME) be given equal status with English medium education (EME) in all developments, and that all resources produced for EME are mirrored appropriately across GME. The review must include a strong focus on GME and is an opportunity to address the current inequalities between GME and EME. GME must be included in any reform from the outset and practice developed which is specific to GME from day one.

Provision of GME at secondary level is being very slowly developed and varies, between Local Authorities, and even school to school within Local Authorities. The majority of GMPE pupils still do not have the opportunity to continue to develop their language skills in secondary education. The review should take more account of this lack of progression and coherence in the broad general education curriculum for Gaelic Medium Education.

Evidence on progress and achievements in each capacity is an opportunity for pupils to use Gaelic outwith the confines of the school classroom and raise their awareness of Gaelic as a language that they can use throughout their lives, in work and leisure. This will allow young Gaelic speakers to contribute to increasing the use of Gaelic within communities and workplaces.

In order for pupils in GME to become 'confident learners', and to leave school with the level of linguistic confidence that they achieved in Gaelic medium primary education, we must ensure progressive improvements in Secondary GME year by year.

Parents and pupils should have an understanding on how learners' progress across each capacity is to be assessed and reassured that evidence on achievements in Gaelic will be generated and recognised. All national bodies involved in education and Gaelic development should work collaboratively to ensure best possible outcomes and opportunities for GME pupils.

In providing opportunities to achieve in different contexts, for example in volunteering work, schools and local authorities should demonstrate that parity of opportunity exists between GME and EME provision.

2.2 Topic: Out of school and college achievements or awards

Background: In Phase One of the Review, we have heard the view that learners should be able to evidence awards and achievements obtained outside school and college.

Question 2: What, if any, information on learners' achievements obtained outside school and college should be gathered? Please explain your response.

Participation in Gaelic medium activities such as An Deasbad Nàiseanta, Film-G and the John Muir Award support learners to progress skills and competencies across all four capacities and develop pupils' fluency in Gaelic. Learners' achievements in all these activities should be recognised.

However, there is very limited access to extra-curricular Gaelic medium activities for pupils and this inequality must be addressed if information on learners' achievements outside school is to be gathered. There must be a national approach to opportunities for pupils.

Extra-curricular activities through the medium of Gaelic are as important to Gaelic medium pupils as these activities are through the medium of English to pupils in EME, with the added dimension that in Gaelic they provide an opportunity for pupils to develop their language skills.

2.3 Topic: Skills and Competences

Question 3: a) Should information be gathered on learners' skills and competencies as part of their senior phase? Y/N/Unsure

b) If you have views on how this might best be done please provide them here.

It is essential that young people continue with their Gaelic medium journey into, and throughout, the senior phase, building on previous learning in Gaelic and ensuring they have the linguistic skills to go forward with Gaelic as part of their educational and working lives.

The present system is failing pupils in GME with the majority of pupils unable to develop their Gaelic language skills during the senior phase and this must be addressed as a matter of urgency as part of educational reform. The reasons for the poor uptake of examinations in Gaelic and for Gaelic as a subject must be investigated and measures taken to address any issues identified.

Particular attention should be evidenced regarding skills and competencies through the medium of Gaelic, including parity of opportunity to evidence skills and competencies through Gaelic for GME pupils. Pupils must be prepared for using Gaelic in situations outside of school, as confident and fluent speakers of the language.

Participation in activities delivered by national partners could be included in award evidence however the criteria and assessment process must be absolutely clear and again GME pupils must be afforded with the same opportunities through Gaelic, as EME pupils will receive through English.

There are a range of Gaelic-language opportunities at community level, which should be accessed to enable young Gaelic-speakers to gain new skills whilst at the same time building community-based Gaelic projects.

3.1 Topic: Exams and other forms of assessment

Question 4: Please share your thoughts on what a ‘better balanced’ assessment system would look like. As well as considering the balance between external examination and internal assessment you may also wish to comment on the frequency of examinations.

There is a place for examination evidence in the Senior Phase but a better balance in the system should be created whereby portfolios of evidence could more regularly contribute to assessed achievement. It will be crucial that there is absolute clarity around how and what will be assessed relating to non-examination-based evidence.

The decreasing numbers of pupils continuing with Gaelic as a subject, both fluent and learners, at secondary level is alarming. This will without doubt have an impact on the number of pupils able to teach in Gaelic, which will have a further detrimental effect on teacher numbers. This decline in pupil numbers will result in many pupils who, despite attaining a degree of fluency in Gaelic at primary level, will leave school with little or no Gaelic. This approach will not deliver the desired numbers of fluent Gaelic speakers unless urgent action is taken.

An expansion of qualifications in Gaelic should be offered and steps taken which would improve the uptake of these awards. National examinations for Gaelic medium should be bespoke and not a translation of English medium papers. Pupils are expected to take examinations in Gaelic with no recognition of the additional challenge that they face with the majority of pupils in GME not having Gaelic as their home language, not living in Gaelic speaking communities, and surrounded by English throughout the majority of their time in school. There should be recognition that Gaelic as a language uses more words than English with pupils given additional time to complete examinations in Gaelic.

The new qualifications agency should review the examination system for GME pupils and as a minimum pupils sitting examinations in Gaelic should have additional time. They should also have access to Gaelic dictionaries during examinations.

4.1 Topic: Recognising Achievement at the end of the Broad General Education (BGE)

Question 5: Please share your thoughts (advantages/disadvantages) on the idea of introducing an achievement, award or qualification at the end of the BGE. This should encompass a breadth of options, harnessing personalisation and choice, including practical, problem-solving tasks.

The introduction of certification at the end of BGE would ensure that GME pupils have some recognition at this stage of their education that they have been educated through the medium of Gaelic. The number of young people leaving Scottish Education without any certification recognising their GME learning journey is a major concern. Every young person who benefits from GME must leave the Scottish Education system with at least one qualification recognizing their achievement. The skills and competencies that they have developed as young bilinguals needs to be recognised.

It will be important to ensure that any leaving certificate and/or BGE digital profile has value in terms of proceeding to the next stage in learning or entering the labour market. For certificates and profiling to have real impact both the young person, their school and any organisation, which is seeking to employ or admit the young person, should value them.

4.2 Topic: Recognising Achievement in the Senior Phase

Question 6: Please share your thoughts (advantages/disadvantages) on the idea of introducing a type of leaving certificate in the Senior Phase.

It is important that young people continue with their Gaelic medium journey into, and throughout, the senior phase, building on previous learning in Gaelic and ensuring they have the linguistic skills to go forward with Gaelic as part of their educational and working lives. Certification which recognises skills and competency in Gaelic would be of value to those who will use Gaelic in the community as a vernacular language, progress to employment, apprenticeships and further and higher education. Certification would also encourage young people to remain involved in Gaelic language activities, but they must be given opportunities to do so, at an equivalent level to pupils engaging in English medium activities.

Young people need to be convinced of the social and economic asset that Gaelic affords.

5.1 Topic: The Potential of Technology

Question 7: How should Scotland's qualifications and assessment system make best use of digital technologies?

The greater use of technology for qualifications and assessment is inevitable, and essential in preparing young people for learning, life and work.

Digital profiles could be a very valuable source of evidence. Absolute clarity on guidance regarding formats and input should be provided with resources and guidance for both GME and EME sectors delivered from the start of any initiative.

6. An Approach to Benefit all Learners - Equity

Question 8: How can we make sure that proposals for a future qualification system will uphold the rights of all learners to demonstrate their achievements?

This is a great opportunity to work towards a system that is more equitable and inclusive. At the moment pupils in GME are unable to access a full Gaelic medium curriculum, 3-18. The majority of GMPE pupils still do not have the opportunity to continue to develop their language skills in secondary education.

This is an essential area for development relating to GME pupils. The rights of GME pupils to gain awards and qualifications through Gaelic must be guaranteed in any system and evidence provided that these rights are safeguarded.

All designated secondary schools for Gaelic medium pupils must be made aware of the minimum offer that is expected to be delivered for GM pupils with GME as a compulsory part of broad general education in keeping with Education Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education.

Timetables in secondary schools can cause difficulties in Broad General Education as well as the Senior Phase with pupils being taken out of classes to allow them to study Gaelic. This often results in pupils developing a resentment towards the language especially if they are being asked to leave a subject area that they enjoy. Timetabling for GME pupils must be addressed. The requirement for Gaelic to be a core subject for GM pupils when they progress to secondary education could assist with timetabling issues.

Data on the post-school destinations of young people from Gaelic Medium Education would be useful. Information on pupils' experiences, opportunities, attainment and achievement throughout their GME journey, as well as any challenges identified by them, could provide us insights as to how improvements could be made.

11. Is there anything else in relation to the reform of qualifications and assessment which is not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise?

The aim of Gaelic medium education must be for a high quality immersive educational experience which results in fluent adults equipped to pass the language on to the next generation.

There are additional challenges which must be addressed to ensure Gaelic is a vibrant element in the young person's life outwith the immediate confines of the classroom. Additional wider curriculum opportunities through the medium of Gaelic are important in GME primary and secondary CfE delivery so that learning may be consolidated through such social interaction and thus by extension, normalise the process. This could be achieved through better planning, and co-ordination by national agencies, local authorities, and schools. Recent initiatives by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, particularly in planning for improvement at secondary level, are addressing some of the issues, but compliance with BnaG recommendations must be compulsory for local authorities and schools if there is to be meaningful progress.

GME BGE and Senior Phase development requires urgent attention, and this should be at the forefront of the required developments from the new Education Agencies. The outcome of the National Consultation on Gaelic conducted by the Scottish Government will be pivotal in ensuring that there is a government led national strategy for GME Secondary development rapidly rolled out across the country with clear targets and timelines.

Teachers are our most precious resource in education and support for teachers, across all of education, but particularly within Gaelic must be a priority in education reform. The recruitment and retention of fluent Gaelic speaking teachers has been, and continues to be, challenging for Gaelic medium education. We must, therefore, ensure that all teachers of Gaelic are able to use all their teaching time in teaching or supporting learners of Gaelic.