



The Scottish  
Government

Education and Lifelong Learning

Research on the Consultation  
on the Next Generation of  
National Qualifications in  
Scotland



# **RESEARCH ON THE CONSULTATION ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN SCOTLAND**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and methodology

1. *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)* was launched in 2004 with the aim of improving the educational outcomes for all children and young people, 3 to 18. The Scottish Government wants to create a qualifications system that reflects the values, purposes and principles of *CfE* to the benefit of all learners.
2. This report presents the findings of a public consultation to inform arrangements for the next generation of National Qualifications in Scotland. The Scottish Government launched the written consultation on 10 June 2008 and it ran until 31 October 2008<sup>1</sup>. It comprised a number of strands: a written public consultation, associated consultation events and qualitative research with key stakeholders. Ipsos MORI Scotland was commissioned to analyse the consultation responses, sample findings at the events and to undertake and analyse the qualitative research.
3. An electronic copy of the consultation document was placed on the Scottish Government's consultations website and hard copies of the consultation document were circulated to schools and other relevant organisations.
4. In total, 1807 responses were received from individuals and organisations. By far the highest proportion of responses received was from secondary schools.
5. The objectives of the qualitative research were to:
  - obtain the views of key stakeholders whose views it was felt were essential to the consultation, but were less likely to respond to the written consultation (secondary school pupils, college students, parents and employers)
  - explore in greater depth reactions to the proposals from some key stakeholders (headteachers, teachers and college lecturers).
6. Thirty three focus groups and 19 depth interviews were undertaken between August and October 2008 across a range of locations in Scotland.

### Main findings

**Proposal 1 – National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability and updated in line with *Curriculum for Excellence***

***Q1. Do you welcome the intention to update all qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher in line with Curriculum for Excellence?***

7. Most (76%) were in favour – although just over half of these respondents had caveats or concerns - and 20% of all respondents were opposed.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/09084232/0>

8. The most common reasons given for supporting the proposal were that: it is logical and necessary to update qualifications in order to implement CfE; there is a need to modernise the curriculum; there is a need for better articulation between levels.
9. There were four main reasons given by those who disagreed with the proposal: CfE is vague, incoherent, or flawed; more information is needed about the changes; there has been too much change already; there is no need for change because the present system works well.
10. Those suggesting implications to be considered mainly commented on the resourcing requirements. Respondents mentioned costs in general and, more specifically, staffing, CPD and the need for centrally produced materials.

**Proposal 2 – a new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications**

***Q2. Early consultation has identified the ‘best’ features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications as the ‘inclusive’ approach to certification contained in Standard Grade and the ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications. Are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?***

11. The most common suggestions/comments were:

- the need for progression between levels - and articulation with Highers in particular
- the option of presentation at two levels as in Standard Grade
- an equivalent of Foundation level at Standard Grade. Some respondents did not feel that the alternative of Access 3 was as inclusive
- external examinations, in order to ensure consistency and credibility
- the practical and investigative aspects of courses
- the broad overview provided by the wide range of topics covered in courses at these levels.

***Q3. Do you agree that units should be graded A-C rather than pass/fail?***

12. Just over half (51%) of respondents agreed with the proposal to grade units A to C, while 43% disagreed.
13. The most common reasons given for agreeing with the proposal related to the perceived benefits for pupils. It was felt that grading would: increase the value of units and would give recognition for those who did well (which would motivate pupils to work harder); provide pupils with useful feedback; provide better evidence than the current ‘pass’ when it comes to appeals.
14. The main reason given for disagreement was the workload implications for teachers. Other reasons cited included problems with developing a

standardised approach to grading and the need for a system of external moderation to ensure consistency and credibility.

**Q4. Do you want graded units to count towards the final award?**

15. Just over half (51%) did not want graded units to count towards the final award, whereas 40% were supportive of this.
16. The main reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were: it is fairer because it takes into account pupils' achievements throughout a course; there is no point in grading at all if grades are not taken into account when determining the final award; pupils would take units more seriously and therefore be motivated to work harder and more consistently throughout the year.
17. Reasons cited by those opposed to the proposal included the risk of demotivating pupils. Some felt that pupils who perform very well throughout the year would not study as hard towards the final exam because they know they are going to pass well. In contrast, pupils who achieve low scores for units would not study either as their chances of obtaining a higher grade are diminished.
18. Other reasons given for opposition were: pupils tend to do less well at the beginning of a course because it takes time to develop understanding and skills; issues relating to the credibility of internal assessment; it would increase pressure on teachers to allow pupils to resit unit assessments to improve their grades.

**Q5. Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support?**

19. Overall, the most popular option was to recognise unit passes only, on the basis that it was the fairest and most transparent option.

**Q6. The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not, please offer an alternative and explain your choice.**

20. The majority were not in favour: 71% of all respondents disagreed while 21% agreed. There was a sense that respondents found the proposed names uninspiring. There was also a view that the names were meaningless as they did not provide an indication of what level had been attained.
21. The most common alternative suggestions for the names of new awards were: keep General for the award at SCQF level 4 and Credit for the award at SCQF level 5; use SCQF levels, for example, Scottish Certificate (of Education) Level 4 and 5, Scottish Award Level 4; Scottish Award Level 5; keep Intermediate 1 and 2.

**Proposal 3 – new awards in literacy and numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5**

***Q7. Do you agree with the proposal to offer literacy and numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5)? If not please offer an alternative.***

22. Overall, a majority were in favour: 61% of all respondents agreed while 30% disagreed.

23. The main reasons cited for agreeing with the proposal were that: literacy and numeracy are essential skills for life; it recognises literacy and numeracy as separate skills from English and Maths and provides a measurement of these skills which is useful for employers and colleges; it will encourage the development of these skills across the curriculum.

24. The main reasons cited for disagreeing with the proposal were that: pupils should have these basic skills already; the expectation that (almost) all pupils will have to take these awards conflicts with the aim of reducing the burden of assessment; having an element of external assessment will lead to teachers teaching pupils what they needed to know in order to pass an exam as opposed to teaching for learning; practical and resource implications in organising the teaching and assessment; the prospect of schools moving away from the practice of making English and Maths compulsory; concerns about whether the awards would be valued by employers, colleges and universities.

***Q8. National Qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) do not have an external examination. Do you agree that any new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an examination?***

25. Overall, a small majority of those who expressed an opinion were in favour: 49% of all respondents agreed while 42% disagreed.

26. By far the most common reasons cited for agreeing related to the credibility and value of the award.

27. The main reason given by those who disagreed with the proposal was that external exams can be a barrier to attainment for pupils working at SCQF level 3 as they cannot cope with that form of assessment.

***Q9. Should weighting between the internal and external assessments for the literacy and numeracy awards be equal? If not, should more weight be attached to the internal or external assessment?***

28. Just under half of all respondents (49%) stated that more weight should be given to external assessment. The main reason was to ensure that the new awards are seen as credible qualifications. Eighteen per cent of respondents supported equal weighting and 14% thought that more weight should be given to internal assessment.

**Q10. When should young people be assessed for literacy and numeracy awards? Option A: At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations. Option B: In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations. Option C: At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.**

29. Option A was the most popular option, selected by 49% of respondents. The main reasons cited were that: it would give pupils more time to work towards their subject exams in the summer of S4; pupils are already overloaded with exams in S4; it would be a good way to mark the end of the broad curriculum in S1-3; the results from the literacy and numeracy awards could provide an indication of the level a pupil should be working at in S4; it would be best for pupils to sit the literacy and numeracy awards at the earliest time offered because, if they do not have literacy and numeracy skills by that point, then it was unlikely that they would improve by S4; the time between S3 and S4 is a critical one for pupils and they can become disengaged by the end of S4.
30. Reasons given for opposing this option were that: pupils in S3 would not take literacy and numeracy awards seriously if they were to be separated from what might be perceived as the 'proper' exams; that there is a contradiction between sitting the literacy and numeracy awards in S3 and the general policy against early presentation for other awards.

#### **Proposal 4 – increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people**

**Q11. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?**

31. Forty-three per cent of all respondents agreed with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years and 36% disagreed. A further 16% agreed to the proposal to allow study over 12 months and 2 years but not over 18 months.
32. The main reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were that: it means that pupils gain a greater depth of learning; pupils will be given more opportunity to pass a qualification at a higher level or achieve a better grade than they might have in a 12 month course; increasing flexibility is a good thing and creates a greater degree of personalisation.
33. The main reasons given by those who saw problems with the 18 month option were that: presenting pupils for a two year Higher has worked well in the past; 18 month courses would necessitate a winter diet of exams which some were opposed to in general; the practical difficulties of accommodating an 18 month course would be much greater than for a 2 year course.
34. The main reasons given for disagreeing overall with the proposal were the practical issues including timetabling and the multi-level teaching that might result. A number of respondents believed that if schools offer different levels of flexibility, there would be inconsistencies across Scotland. Others felt that pacing the material of a 1 year course over 2 years might demotivate some pupils, especially if they see others completing the same course in 12 months.



35. Some parents, pupils and teachers were also concerned that employers and Higher Education institutions would not value awards taken over 18 months and 2 years as highly as those taken over 12 months.

**Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations?**

36. Overall, the majority of all respondents were in opposition: 24% agreed and 69% disagreed.

37. The main reasons cited for agreeing with the proposal were that: it provides Christmas leavers with an opportunity to gain qualifications before they leave school; spreading exams out over the year would reduce the pressure of having too many at once; it is necessary to introduce winter exams if there are to be 18 month courses; more flexibility in assessment will give pupils the opportunity to work at their own pace; it gives pupils the opportunity to resit exams they have failed in the summer.

38. Respondents not in favour of the proposal highlighted many practical problems, all of which were thought to disrupt the school year and lead to an increase in costs. These included: providing the physical space for exams; the impact on teaching time; resource implications for the SQA; pupils would feel like they had exams all the time; seasonal problems with pupils involved in events and activities such as concerts and dances at this time. Additionally, some respondents commented that a winter diet was tried before and was not successful.

**Q13. If you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations, what subjects and levels of qualification might first be offered?**

39. Of the 448 respondents who were in favour of introducing a winter diet of examinations, 87% answered this question.

40. Around a quarter of respondents suggested that every subject at every level should be offered as this was seen as the fairest and most flexible option for pupils. Those who did feel that particular subjects should be offered first felt that it should be high uptake or 'core' subjects such as Maths, English, Numeracy and Literacy. One of the reasons given was that using subjects where there was likely to be sufficient demand for a winter diet would provide the most worthwhile trial.

41. In terms of the levels offered, there were two main viewpoints. The most common suggestion was that Highers (and to a lesser degree Advanced Highers) should be offered first. Less commonly it was felt that it should first be offered at SCQF level 4 and 5. This was linked to a view that a winter diet would be most beneficial for Christmas leavers.

42. An alternative stance was that a winter diet should be used for resits only.

**Q14. Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?**

43. Overall, a small majority were in favour: 52% agreed while 43% disagreed.
44. The main reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were that: it would challenge and motivate the most able pupils; the increased time for teaching and learning (rather than assessment) would deepen pupils' learning and increase achievement; it was achievable for the most able pupils; it was working well in some schools already.
45. The main reasons cited for opposing the proposal were that: pupils benefit from the exam practice gained by taking qualifications at lower levels; the need for a safety net if things 'go wrong' later on; pupils needed the knowledge base gained from the lower qualifications before they could handle the Higher; pupils would lack the maturity for Highers.

**Q15. Do you have any other ideas for increasing flexibility within the senior phase (S4 to S6)?**

46. Nearly half of respondents (819 out of 1807) made suggestions for increasing flexibility in the senior phase.
47. Suggestions for increasing flexibility in the senior phase fell into five broad categories:
- increasing the number of vocational courses and opportunities
  - better resourcing
  - the nature and structure of qualifications offered
  - timetabling and timing
  - modes of delivery and assessment.

**Timeline**

48. Most respondents (78%) did not think that the indicative timeline in the consultation document (approaches based on the new curriculum being introduced from school year 2009/10) was realistic and just 15% of all respondents thought that it was. Following Management Board advice, the Cabinet Secretary on 31 October 2008 announced an additional year for implementation of *Curriculum for Excellence* with the effect that the new and revised qualifications would be introduced from school year 2013/14 onwards.

**Other comments**

49. Overall, around half of respondents (893 of 1807) responded in the 'any other comments' section of the consultation document. These comments did not always arise from consultation proposals but were often related to concerns about the implementation of a broad general education from pre-school to the end of S3 (and the particular implications of this for S1-S3) as proposed in *Building the Curriculum 3*, and about the consultation process itself.

# 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of the public consultation on the next generation of National Qualifications in Scotland. The Scottish Government launched the written consultation on 10 June 2008 and it ran until 31 October 2008. Ipsos MORI was commissioned to undertake:

- an analysis of the consultation responses;
- qualitative research in order to gather informed views of a range of key stakeholders. This involved focus groups and depth interviews with parents, pupils, teachers, headteachers, college students and lecturers and employers;
- an analysis of discussions from 5 national stakeholder consultation events, held across Scotland.

## Background

1.2 *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)* was launched in 2004 with the aim of improving the educational outcomes for all children and young people aged 3-18. Among its aims are to provide a framework for young people to gain the skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that are fundamental in preparing them for life after formal education. *CfE* is designed to be a coherent and inclusive curriculum that will enable Scotland's young people to become successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals.

1.3 In Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) 2006 report *Improving Scottish Education*<sup>2</sup> it was stated that "Scottish education does many things well and some things particularly well". However, it also highlighted some areas for improvement. In particular, it was suggested of young people that "too many do not develop sufficiently the competences, capabilities and values which are vital for the future success and well-being of both themselves and Scotland as a whole." A 2007 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*<sup>3</sup>, also identified the strengths of the Scottish education system but raised concerns about inequalities in the system. In particular, that too many young people are leaving secondary education with minimal or no qualifications.

1.4 In response to these challenges, the Scottish Government wants to create a qualifications system that reflects the values, purposes and principles of

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<sup>2</sup> HMIE report on *Improving Scottish Education* (2006)

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/Publications.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> OECD report on *Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland*  
[www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264040991](http://www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264040991)

*Curriculum for Excellence*: a flexible system that offers pupils of all abilities a route to progress into the next stage of their life.

- 1.5 In order to inform this system, the consultation on the next generation of National Qualifications was launched in June 2008 and covered four main proposals:
  - Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications will be retained as points of stability and all National Qualifications will be reviewed in line with CfE;
  - a new qualification will replace Standard Grade General and Credit and Intermediate 1 and 2 (SCQF 4 and SCQF 5) qualifications, reflecting the best of both;
  - new awards in literacy and in numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5;
  - increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people.
- 1.6 After a competitive tendering process, Ipsos MORI was commissioned to analyse the responses to the consultation, conduct and analyse the qualitative research, sample findings from consultation events and to synthesise the evidence from all strands into this report.
- 1.7 The following chapter describes the consultation strands in detail. Subsequent chapters comprise an in depth analysis of the findings for each proposal in the order they appear in the consultation document. Appendix 1 provides summary tables of responses to each consultation question, Appendix 2 is a list of the organisations and individuals that were sent a copy of the consultation document and Appendix 3 is an example of a topic guide used in the qualitative research.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Any changes to the qualifications system in Scotland will have an impact on a wide range of stakeholders including the ‘beneficiaries’ (young people, their parents, their future employers and universities) and the ‘deliverers’ (secondary schools, colleges and local authorities) who have distinct interests and needs. Accordingly, it was important to capture the views of as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and to gain a deep understanding of any issues surrounding the proposed changes. This chapter describes the 2 strands of the consultation in detail.

### **The written consultation**

2.2 The Scottish Government officially launched the consultation document, *A Consultation on the Next Generation of National Qualifications in Scotland*<sup>4</sup>, on 10 June 2008. The document contains 16 questions on the Government’s proposed changes, the rationale behind each proposed change and the relevant policy background.

2.3 An electronic copy of the document was placed on the Scottish Government’s consultations website so that all interested parties, including members of the public, had an opportunity to express their views.

2.4 Hard copies of the consultation document were circulated to all primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities and local authorities in Scotland. Additionally, 113 organisations and individuals representing a range of interests were sent a copy of the document (a full list can be found in Appendix 2). Responses to the consultation document could be submitted either electronically or by post.

2.5 The deadline for responses to the document was 31 October 2008.

### **Consultation responses**

2.6 In total, 1807 responses were received from individuals and organisations and Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of responses by respondent type<sup>5</sup>. The highest proportion of responses received was from secondary schools<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/09084232/0>

<sup>5</sup> Respondent type was determined using information provided on the respondent information forms that accompanied each response.

<sup>6</sup> This includes responses from individual teachers and headteachers as well as responses submitted on behalf of whole schools or subject departments within schools. It also includes individuals who entered a school name under the ‘Organisation’ field on their respondent information forms but did not provide further information on their role within the school.

**Table 2.1 Summary of responses to written consultation**

<b>Respondent type</b>	<b>Number of responses received</b>
Secondary schools <sup>6</sup>	<b>1314</b>
Parents and parent representative groups e.g., Scottish Parent Teacher Council	<b>66</b>
Colleges and college representative organisations e.g., Scotland's Colleges	<b>33</b>
Universities and university representative organisations e.g., Universities Scotland	<b>25</b>
Employers and employer representative organisations e.g., Federation of Small Businesses	<b>25</b>
Local authorities <sup>7</sup>	<b>31</b>
Primary Schools	<b>9</b>
Teachers' representatives/ teaching unions	<b>11</b>
Young people's representatives/groups e.g. Barnardo's Scotland	<b>11</b>
Other (including individuals and organisations that did not fit into the above categories or did not provide sufficient information to be assigned a code)	<b>282</b>

2.7 The majority of respondents completed the structured questionnaire provided in the consultation document. Others submitted full written responses or emails. The length of the latter type of submission ranged from a single page commenting on selected issues through to very lengthy responses, some of which appended additional materials. Where permission has been given by the respondent, responses have been published on the Scottish Government's website<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Analysis of consultation responses***

2.8 The analysis comprised several stages. Firstly, the Scottish Government created a database for recording all submissions. This contained basic data in relation to the identification and nature of the respondent, their address and whether their response was confidential. Respondents who requested that their responses remain confidential have not been directly quoted in this report.

2.9 Secondly, Ipsos MORI undertook the analysis of all responses. This involved reading each response in full and recording the views contained on a specially

<sup>7</sup> This includes the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)

<sup>8</sup> The website link to published responses is <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/12/04112537/0>

designed spreadsheet containing fields for each question in the consultation document.

- 2.10 Each respondent was assigned one of the 'respondent type' categories described in Table 2.1 above.
- 2.11 Individual code frames for each question in the consultation document were established using an initial batch of 50 responses.
- 2.12 Following this, responses for each question were read and assigned a code. The codeframes were amended throughout the coding to include any new codes emerging.
- 2.13 For each question, a general "count" of the number respondents was undertaken to reveal:
  - the general level of support and opposition for the change considered
  - the main reasons underpinning support and opposition
  - the key caveats/concerns expressed.
- 2.14 Finally, subgroup analysis of these findings was conducted to identify any clear differences in opinion by respondent type.

#### ***A note on the interpretation of consultation responses***

- 2.15 It should be noted that, although the method allowed for a general "count" of the number of respondents identifying overall support and opposition along with the key issues raised, the analysis of the consultation responses presented in this report is not intended to be a primarily quantitative account. It should be noted that:
  - the point of a consultation such as this is not to be a 'referendum' on the different options but to inform and enhance the policy process by providing the opportunity for all interested parties to express their views and their reasons for holding these views
  - many submissions represented the views of groups of individuals who had got together to submit a joint response and some were from organisations, sometimes representing the views of thousands of individuals. This makes it inappropriate to count the responses in this way (and impossible to count the number of individuals represented)
  - a large proportion of responses to the consultation were from secondary schools, meaning that any count of responses is heavily skewed towards the opinions of this group
  - respondents opted-in to the consultation and therefore are not necessarily representative of their sector.
- 2.16 Instead, the main focus of this analysis is on reflecting the range of issues which have emerged without attaching weight to particular viewpoints. Where proportions have been given, these are only intended as a broad indication of the level of support, subject to the limitations listed above.

- 2.17 The views presented in this analysis have not been vetted in any way for factual accuracy. The opinions and comments submitted to the consultation may be based on fact or, indeed, may be based on what respondents perceive to be accurate, but which others may interpret differently. The report, therefore, may contain analysis of responses which may be factually inaccurate or based on misunderstanding or misinformation on the issues, but nevertheless reflect strongly held views. In some instances, such inaccuracies and misunderstandings will be relevant findings in themselves.
- 2.18 It should also be borne in mind that as is the case with many other consultation exercises, detailed comment is generally given where there is disagreement or concern about a proposal. When they agree with a suggestion, consultees are less likely to elaborate on the reasons for their agreement or approval. The relative length of the sections on agreement and disagreement should not therefore be read as an indication of the level of agreement or disagreement.

### **Qualitative research**

- 2.19 The aim of the qualitative research was to gather informed views of some key stakeholders. The specific objectives of the qualitative research were to:
- obtain the views of key stakeholders whose views it was felt were essential to the consultation, but were less likely to respond to the written consultation (secondary school pupils, college students, parents and employers)
  - explore in greater depth reactions to the proposals from some key stakeholders (headteachers, teachers and college lecturers).

### ***Composition of stakeholder groups consulted in the qualitative research***

- 2.20 The selection of participants for the qualitative research was designed to capture a range of perspectives within each stakeholder group. This section details the composition of each stakeholder group consulted in turn.

#### *Parents*

- 2.21 Parents were selected on the basis of their views of their child's likely destination after they leave school, that is, whether they are likely to go straight into employment or to go on to Further/Higher Education. This was to capture any potential differences in the focus on different qualifications, for example, parents whose children are planning to enter straight into employment might focus more on the new proposals relating to the Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications while those whose children will require Highers or Advanced Highers to access university might concentrate on the proposals affecting these qualifications.
- 2.22 Additionally, parents of primary school children and parents of secondary school children were consulted. The first group was important as their children will be affected by the changes while the latter group have experience of the current arrangements.



### *Employers*

- 2.23 Employers within the tourism, retail, finance, construction, recruitment and public sectors were invited to take part in the qualitative research as these sectors tend to employ large numbers of school leavers and therefore place more emphasis on National Qualifications in recruitment decisions than employers who recruit those with higher level qualifications.
- 2.24 In order to consult with a wide range of employers selection also took into account business size and geographical location.

### *Schools*

- 2.25 Ipsos MORI selected 8 secondary schools (6 local authority, 1 independent school and 1 special school) and qualitative research was undertaken with the headteacher, teachers and pupils. In the special school, only the teachers were asked to take part.
- 2.26 School location, both in terms of rurality and deprivation, was also taken into account in the selection of schools in order to ensure a wide range of school types.

### *Pupils*

- 2.27 Within each of the selected schools, pupils in S4 and S5 were chosen as these pupils were either studying or had just finished studying at SCQF levels 3, 4 or 5 (the levels most affected by the proposed changes).
- 2.28 Half of the groups contained pupils who were likely to go on to Higher Education and half contained pupils who were 'disengaged with education'.

### *Teachers*

- 2.29 Teachers of a range of different subjects were selected to take part in the qualitative research. All focus groups were intended to include English and Maths teachers as it was felt important to gather their views on the proposed introduction of literacy and numeracy awards although this was not possible in all schools.
- 2.30 Two primary school teachers from associated primaries were also invited to each focus group as it was felt that they might be able to provide a different perspective on the proposals than would secondary school teachers. Again, this was not possible at all schools.

### *College lecturers*

- 2.31 College lecturers who delivered National Qualifications were selected to take part in order to ensure the relevance of the discussion topic. A range of college lecturers in different subjects were invited including those delivering English and Maths.

### *College students*

2.32 College students who studied at least one National Qualification subject were chosen to take part in the qualitative research, again, to ensure the relevance of the discussion topic.

### **Recruitment**

2.33 All recruitment for the qualitative research was undertaken by Ipsos MORI and the strategy varied for each stakeholder group.

2.34 Parents were recruited door-to-door by experienced Ipsos MORI recruiters. Recruiters were issued with a structured recruitment questionnaire, and corresponding recruitment instructions, which assessed the eligibility of people to take part in the qualitative research.

2.35 Businesses within the sectors outlined above were randomly selected using a business directory, and contacted by telephone by a member of the research team. The member of staff best suited to take part in the research was identified, such as an HR officer or the owner in smaller establishments. These individuals were provided with background details of the research over the telephone or by e-mail, and appointments were set up with those who agreed to participate.

2.36 Before inviting selected schools and colleges to take part in the research, letters were sent to the Director of Education of the relevant local authorities, the Scottish Council of Independent Schools and the Association of Scotland's Colleges. The letters provided information on the research and the opportunity to opt-out.

2.37 Letters were then sent to the headteachers of the selected schools and principals of the selected colleges, explaining the purpose and nature of the research. Follow-up calls were conducted by the research team and appointments made with the schools and colleges who were willing to participate. A liaison person within each school and college was identified and Ipsos MORI worked with them to identify the most suitable pupils or college students and teachers or college lecturers to take part.

### **Qualitative fieldwork**

2.38 The research team at Ipsos MORI moderated all groups and depth interviews. All qualitative fieldwork took place between August and October 2008.

2.39 As the consultation involved a complex set of proposals, the qualitative research was designed to ensure that it gathered informed views from each stakeholder group. Discussions typically lasted around 2 hours in order to provide time for stakeholders to engage with background and additional information relating to the current system and the consultation proposals.

2.40 Parents were identified as a group not likely to have detailed knowledge of the existing qualifications system. To gather meaningful contributions from them,

reconvened methods were used. Four groups of parents were invited to attend two evening focus groups with a break of three weeks in between. This allowed the research team to provide participants with appropriate background information and participants to absorb and reflect on this information between the two groups.

- 2.41 Twelve face-to-face depth interviews were conducted with employers. Employers were also provided with the background information as required during the interview.
- 2.42 Each school that agreed to take part in the research was visited by a researcher. During the course of the day, the researcher conducted two focus groups with pupils, an in-depth interview with the headteacher and a focus group with the teachers<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.43 The colleges were also visited by a member of the research team. In one college, a focus group with college students and a separate one with the college lecturers took place. In the second college, a focus group with the college lecturers took place.
- 2.44 In keeping with practice in qualitative research, adult participants who took part in focus groups in their own time (i.e. parents, teachers and college lecturers) received token remuneration from Ipsos MORI to cover their time and any associated travel or childcare costs. This approach enabled participation from a representative sample of the stakeholders.
- 2.45 A summary of the methods used with each stakeholder type is provided in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2.2 Methods used with each stakeholder group**

<b>Stakeholder group</b>	<b>Qualitative research method</b>
Parents	4 reconvened focus groups
Employers	12 depth interviews
Pupils	14 focus groups
Teachers	8 focus groups
Headteachers	7 depth interviews
College students	1 focus group
College lecturers	2 focus groups

*Discussion guides design*

- 2.46 Ipsos MORI, in collaboration with the Research Advisory Group, designed discussion guides to facilitate the qualitative research. In total, five discussion guides were produced: two for parents (one for each session), one for

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<sup>9</sup>As already noted, in the special school only the teachers took part in the research..

employers, one for pupils and college students<sup>10</sup> and one for teachers, college lecturers and headteachers<sup>11</sup>. Although all discussion guides were based on the questions asked in the official written consultation document, each was tailored to the experiences and interests of each stakeholder group to ensure that discussion remained relevant. This meant that not all proposals were discussed with all stakeholders. For example, pupils were not consulted on the proposal on the indicative timeline. An example of one of these guides can be found in Appendix 3.

### *Analysis of qualitative research findings*

2.47 With the permission of participants, all discussions were recorded and then transcribed for analysis. XSight (a qualitative analysis software package) was used to organise, code, search and retrieve the text.

2.48 Throughout this analysis, findings were cross referenced with those from the written consultation to allow for a deeper understanding of any common themes and to highlight any diverging opinions.

### *A note on the interpretation of qualitative research findings*

2.49 It is important to note that the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise to the wider population in terms of the *prevalence* of attitudes or behaviour, but to identify and explore the different issues and themes relating to the subject being researched. The assumption is that issues and themes affecting participants are a reflection of issues and themes in the wider population. Although the *extent* to which they apply to the wider population, or specific sub-groups cannot be quantified, the value of qualitative research is in identifying the range of different issues involved and the way in which they impact on people.

## **Consultation workshops**

2.50 A series of 5 consultation workshops<sup>12</sup> were organised by the Scottish Government and a range of representatives from across the education sector, including parents, were invited to attend. The workshops provided an opportunity for the attendees to find out more about the proposed changes and to discuss these in detail and ask questions of representatives from the Scottish Government. The events were intended to stimulate debate and it was hoped that attendees would encourage their colleagues to respond to the consultation.

2.51 Discussions during the workshops were facilitated by representatives from: the Scottish Government, Learning and Teaching Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. A researcher from Ipsos MORI attended each event to

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<sup>10</sup> There were slight variations in the wording of some questions to reflect the different experiences between college students and pupils.

<sup>11</sup> As above, some slight variations exist in the wording to reflect the different circumstances of these stakeholders.

<sup>12</sup> The events took place during September and October 2008 in Ayr, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness.

take notes on the key issues and themes emerging from the discussions. Three discussions from each event were recorded and transcribed. A summary of the themes emerging from these events was produced and the findings have been integrated into this report.

### **Presentation of the findings**

- 2.52 In a summary document such as this, it is not possible to cover every detailed issue raised in every written response or discussion.
- 2.53 Rather, this report provides a summary of the general level of support and opposition to each proposed change, the key considerations and caveats underpinning support and opposition, and highlights any variation in the views of different categories of respondents.
- 2.54 This report also outlines some related issues which were not specifically addressed in the consultation document but were raised in the qualitative fieldwork or in the 'Any other comments' section of the written consultation document.

### **3 PROPOSAL 1 – NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AT ACCESS, HIGHER AND ADVANCED HIGHER WILL BE RETAINED AS POINTS OF STABILITY**

#### **Summary of background information in the consultation paper**

- 3.1 National Qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher will be retained as points of stability.** Highers, in particular, will remain the ‘gold standard’ of the Scottish education system. The content of all National Qualifications will be updated to reflect the values, purposes and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. Some aspects of the structure of these qualifications will also be reviewed.
- 3.2** The current range of Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications were introduced in schools and colleges as part of the Higher Still development programme in 1999/2000 and remain highly respected and well-used qualifications.
- 3.3** Access qualifications – which are offered at SCQF levels 1, 2 and 3 – are wholly internally assessed and provide valuable opportunities to recognise the learning of students who were previously poorly served by the qualifications system. Access 1 is designed for students who require considerable support with their learning, while Access 2 is designed for students with more moderate support needs. Access 3 is comparable with Standard Grade Foundation level. The popularity of these qualifications (particularly Access 3) is reflected in entry figures, which have shown significant growth since their introduction.
- 3.4** Highers – which are at level 6 in the SCQF – remain the ‘gold standard’ of Scottish qualifications and have a lineage dating back to 1888.
- 3.5** Advanced Highers – at level 7 in the SCQF – have attracted praise as providing excellent preparation for higher education or employment.
- 3.6** National Qualifications must change to reflect the revised curriculum. SQA will undertake a review programme, with the advice and support of key stakeholders in the education and wider community, to ensure that National Qualifications at all levels build upon the experiences and outcomes being developed for the new curriculum.
- 3.7** The qualifications system must operate as a cohesive framework. Decisions taken in relation to one part of the framework will impact upon other parts.
- 3.8** Although the changes to Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications will be largely focused on content, some technical elements of their structure may well have to be reviewed in the light of decisions taken on the new qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5. This is in order to ensure good articulation and progression routes for young people. A further change may be necessary in relation to introducing compensatory awards (see Proposal 2). This consultation focuses mainly on National Qualifications and the units that make them up. However, the Scottish Government recognises that there may

be consequences for those elements of SQA's portfolio of qualifications used mainly in college based provision. Any changes arising from this consultation will be taken into account in future work relating to this provision.

- 3.9 At all levels, the revised system of National Qualifications must ensure that young people have an effective and progressive transition from their broad general education up to the end of S3 into more specialised study for qualifications. The new qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (see Proposal 2) will offer effective progression routes from Access 3 and into Higher and Advanced Higher. This will help to ensure a coherent system of curriculum and qualifications.
- 3.10 Every young person should be able to move into the qualifications framework at a level that is appropriate to their needs. For example, vulnerable learners may focus primarily on Access qualifications in S4 and progress either laterally within an SCQF level or through other SCQF levels. The majority of young people should move into the new qualifications at SCQF level 4 or 5 in S4. Some will then be able to progress to Highers at a later point. The most able young people should be free to study for Highers from S4 (see Proposal 4).
- 3.11 It is imperative that the timescale for introducing revised qualifications ensures articulation and coherence between the revised curriculum and the qualifications framework, allowing young people to experience a smooth progression from curriculum areas into more specialised study for qualifications from S4 onwards.

**Q1. Do you welcome the intention to update all qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*? Please comment on any implications to be considered.**

3.12 Almost all respondents (1739 out of 1807) answered this question and 199 commented on the implications. Most (76%) were in favour – although just over half of these respondents had caveats or concerns. Overall, 20% of all respondents were opposed. The opposition came almost exclusively from respondents from secondary schools and from parents and 'others' who responded to the consultation<sup>13</sup>.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

3.13 The most common reasons given for supporting the proposal were that:

- it is logical and necessary to update qualifications in order to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*

*It is very important that we avoid preparation for the familiar and we seek a greater emphasis on testing the skills and capacities which are central to a Curriculum for Excellence. We recognise that the final qualifications framework should build on the work that is done on a*

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<sup>13</sup> This issue was not explored in the qualitative research with parents, pupils or employers.

*curriculum which is designed to go from age 3 to 18. (Association of Directors of Education Scotland, consultation response)*

- there is a need to modernise the curriculum

*Major cultural and technical change has and is happening at an increasing rate, which is rendering Highers, Advanced Highers and all other qualifications less fit for purpose with time, so a programme of modernisation to respond to this is very welcome. (Scotland's Colleges, consultation response)*

- there is a need for better articulation between levels.

### 3.14 Other reasons given were:

- problems with the current assessment system (e.g. assessment driven courses, too much assessment and specific problems with NABs<sup>14</sup>)
- a need for more emphasis and recognition of non-academic skills (e.g. social skills, work skills and life skills)

*Incorporating the principles of Curriculum for Excellence (Enabling young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) will lead to qualifications which are more relevant to the world of work. (Employer/Business Representative, consultation response)*

- the current system is too cluttered and complicated.

### **Caveats and concerns from those in agreement**

3.15 Just over half of those who agreed with the proposal also registered caveats and concerns. In particular, respondents felt they needed more information about *Curriculum for Excellence* and specific details about what the changes would be.

*...clarity in relation to the curriculum (i.e. CfE) must be achieved before there can be meaningful discussion in relation to any alterations to the national qualifications regime in Scotland. (Educational Institute of Scotland, consultation response)*

3.16 There was also considerable concern about the timescale, the number of changes happening at once and the impact on workload and teaching time.

3.17 Other caveats were about the need to:

- retain specific features of these qualifications (rigorous testing, the academic content and external elements were all mentioned)

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<sup>14</sup> 'NABs' are packs of support materials drawn from the National Assessment Bank which contain instruments of assessment and marking guidelines,



- ensure articulation between levels
- keep changes to a minimum because the present system works well and is already in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*
- provide adequate resources and CPD to implement the changes
- engage in more consultation with stakeholders, especially teachers.

### ***Reasons for disagreement with the proposal***

3.18 There were four main reasons given by those who disagreed with the proposal:

- *Curriculum for Excellence* is vague, incoherent, or flawed

*The CfE proposals are ill thought out and lack the detail needed to devise an examination system. (Individual, consultation response)*

- more information is needed about the changes
- there has been too much change already
- there is no need for change because the present system works well.

### ***Implications***

3.19 Those suggesting implications to be considered mainly commented on the resourcing requirements. Respondents mentioned costs in general and, more specifically, staffing, CPD and the need for centrally produced materials.

3.20 Other implications mentioned were:

- the possibility that entrance requirements to HE and FE may alter as a result of the changes to the qualifications
- the need to review the assessment methodology as well as the course content (including the number of NABs and the length of NABs).

## **4 PROPOSAL 2 – A NEW QUALIFICATION WILL REPLACE THE PRESENT STANDARD GRADE GENERAL AND CREDIT LEVELS AND INTERMEDIATE 1 AND 2 (SCQF 4 AND SCQF 5) QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Summary of background information in the consultation paper**

- 4.1 The current system of National Qualifications is successful in many ways. However, there is evidence that some elements of the system are not easy to understand or use. There are particular issues around National Qualifications at SCQF levels 4 and 5 (Standard Grade Credit and General/Intermediate 1 and 2). Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications were intended originally for different year groups and they have different structures and purposes. However, some complexity and blurring of purposes has arisen over the years.
- 4.2 The consultation therefore proposed the development of a new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5 to replace Standard Grade at Credit and General levels and Intermediate 1 and 2. The new qualification will reflect the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate. Standard Grade Foundation level will be removed and Access 3 will provide certification at SCQF level 3.
- 4.3 Research with stakeholder groups undertaken prior to the consultation identified the following as the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications:
- the 'inclusive' approach to certification contained in Standard Grade; and
  - the 'unit based' structure of Intermediate qualifications.
- 4.4 In addition, stakeholders commented that assessment must be closely integrated with learning and teaching approaches.
- 4.5 The consultation proposed the following features of the new qualification:
- it will cover two levels - SCQF 4 and 5 - and be available in a wide range of subjects;
  - it will have a unit based structure;
  - the notional course duration will be similar to the existing arrangements for Intermediate qualifications;
  - external examinations will be retained at all levels where they are currently used for certification;
  - the course award will reflect performance both in units and in the external examination; and
  - the course award will be graded A-D (A-C is a pass and D a 'near miss', as in present Intermediate courses.)
- 4.6 The consultation also requested views on the following proposals:

- The units of the new qualification would be assessed internally and moderated externally. This would reflect current practice in National Qualifications. The consultation proposed that one way to improve the credibility of units would be to design unit assessments that allow young people to demonstrate the full range of learning. These assessments could be marked and graded on a scale A-C to accredit successful performance. Assigning grades to units in this way would enable candidates to demonstrate a range of ability levels and help them prepare for the final external assessment. The consultation made a further separate proposal that unit assessments designed in this way could contribute to the overall course award.
- Compensatory arrangements should be introduced so that young people failing an examination have their learning towards that qualification recognised formally in some way. To provide consistency, compensatory awards would also be introduced for Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications.
- The consultation proposed that the new qualification should be named General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5) but sought views on this and requested other suggestions.

**Q2. Early consultation has identified the ‘best’ features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications as:**

- the ‘inclusive’ approach to certification contained in Standard Grade; and
- the ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications.

**Are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?**

4.7 Just over half of respondents (1031 out of 1807) suggested features which they thought should be included in the new qualification. Most Local Authorities made suggestions. Fewer parents and employers/business representatives did so though the desire for an inclusive system came through strongly in the qualitative research with parents.

4.8 A number of respondents did not identify other features for inclusion but made other comments - including some who disagreed that a unit-based structure was desirable.

4.9 Some respondents felt that Standard Grades were working well and should be retained.

4.10 There were some comments about the lack of a consultation question on whether Standard Grades and Intermediates should be replaced.

4.11 The features of the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which respondents valued and thought should be included in the new qualifications are discussed below.

4.12 Progression between levels - and articulation with Highers in particular - was a key concern. It was raised by all sub-groups in the consultation and by teachers and pupils in the qualitative research. In some subjects, the content and structure of the Intermediate courses were felt to provide the best basis for progression while in other subjects the Standard Grade courses were preferred. One of the most common suggestions therefore was to retain the content of whichever course provided the best preparation for future qualifications.

4.13 A popular feature of Standard Grades for some was the option of presentation at two levels (e.g. Foundation with General or General with Credit). This was felt to maximise pupils' chances of a higher level award while providing a safety net. Local authorities, in particular, made this point.

*...you're going to get more presented at a lower level, because you can't take the risk. If they're on that borderline, who's going to take that risk? That's the danger. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*One of the most successful features of Standard Grade is the fact that pupils are presented for two papers, which although administratively clumsy, provides both an opportunity for success and a safety net for failure. (School Leaders Scotland, consultation response)*

4.14 The issue of presentation at two levels was closely linked with concerns about inclusiveness. Respondents agreed that the 'inclusive' approach to certification was important and a number felt that the Foundation level at Standard Grade (or an equivalent) should therefore be retained.

4.15 For a number of reasons, some respondents did not feel that the alternative of Access 3 was as inclusive:

- it would not be seen as the 'same' qualification as General/Advanced General (in the way that Foundation and General Standard Grades are seen as different levels of the same qualification)
- if Access 3 is timetabled and taught separately, it would be less easy for pupils to move between levels. The current flexibility to move between levels 3 and 4 gives some pupils the opportunity to exceed initial expectations and achieve at the higher level

*We fear that most schools would be forced into a situation where the Access 3 class had to be timetabled separately, since there is nothing said to reassure us that the courses for the new qualification will be constructed in such a way that the level 4 courses can be taught alongside Access 3 courses. Nothing is said about pupils' likely ability to move between levels, particularly between levels 3 and 4. (Inverclyde Council, consultation response)*

- the external exam at Foundation level was seen to provide external credibility.

- 4.16 The importance of retaining external examinations, in order to ensure consistency and credibility, was another of the more frequent comments.
- 4.17 At the same time, many respondents valued the internal and continuous assessment of practical work, course work and units. This was a feature mentioned by several local authorities in particular.
- 4.18 Related to this was a desire to retain the practical and investigative aspects of courses. For example, there were specific mentions of the investigative element of Standard Grade Religious Studies, the practical activities in Intermediate 1 and 2 Chemistry, the applications led elements of several Standard Grade science courses and the practical abilities project in Standard Grade Business Management.
- 4.19 Respondents also noted other specific features of current courses that they felt should be included. The assessed talk and the folio in Standard Grade English were the most frequently mentioned.
- 4.20 The broad overview provided by the wide range of topics covered in courses at these levels was seen as a positive feature. The opportunity to study a wide range of subjects was also mentioned by a few respondents and there was concern that there should not be a reduction in the total number of courses that pupils might study at these levels.

**Q3. One of the proposals is to grade units. Do you agree that units should be graded A-C rather than pass/fail?**

- 4.21 Almost all (1721 out of 1807) respondents answered this question. Just over half (51%) of all respondents agreed with the proposal to grade units A to C while 43% disagreed.
- 4.22 Parents and employers were more likely than other groups to agree with the proposal. In contrast, around three-quarters of respondents from colleges disagreed.
- 4.23 Pupils and college students who took part in the qualitative research were generally supportive of grading.
- 4.24 Views were more evenly split among the rest of the subgroups, with 52% of secondary schools in favour.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

- 4.25 The most common reasons given for agreeing with the proposal to grade units related to perceived benefits for pupils. It was felt that grading would increase the value of units and would give recognition for those who did well; this would motivate pupils to work harder.

*It is quite disheartening for a pupil when they have put an immense amount of effort into a piece of work and then get the same result as*

*the person who did just enough. Pass/fail develops an attitude of pupils just having to meet minimum standards. (Teacher, consultation response 029)*

- 4.26 Respondents also acknowledged that grades would provide pupils with useful feedback. It was felt that the present pass or fail system gave pupils a false sense of security because passing units did not always translate into success in the final exam. If, however, grades were attached to units, respondents felt that this would enable pupils to judge their progress and set realistic targets for the final exam. It would also enable them to identify their strengths as well as areas they need to improve on.

*I think graded would be better because then you have an indication of how you are doing, because you might be passing the NABS or whatever and think, okay I'm doing fine and then hit the exam and be like, oh. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

*It means it gives you a better idea of when you're coming to revision as to how much extra you are going to put in and where, because if you're just told pass or fail... it could just be a scrape. (College student, qualitative research)*

- 4.27 Furthermore, some respondents felt that graded units would be more useful than the current 'pass' when it comes to appeals, by providing them with better evidence.
- 4.28 Another reason given by those in favour was that grade feedback would be useful for teachers as it would allow them to target support. A number of respondents also felt that grades could aid teachers when determining the correct level of study for a pupil or when they are providing estimate grades to the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).
- 4.29 Graded units were also perceived to be useful for providing employers, colleges and universities with a better and more meaningful indication of a pupil's achievements.

*Evidence of grading within units will also provide universities with a clear pattern of achievement across a range of qualifications. This may provide important evidence for those courses which are under pressure and which must select between very able candidates. (Universities Scotland, consultation response)*

*CBI Scotland believes that a grading system of A-C is preferable to pass/fail. This will allow employers to better ascertain the performance of any prospective employee. (CBI Scotland, consultation response)*

### ***Caveats and concerns for agreement with the proposal***

- 4.30 A typical caveat expressed by those who agreed with the proposal was that, to ensure consistency, units would need to be rewritten to address the fact that they are currently set at level C (and thus it is not possible to achieve an A). It

was also noted that some schools currently administer an additional A/B unit test; graded units would therefore remove the need for this additional layer of assessment.

4.31 Other caveats expressed were:

- units should only be graded if the grades are then used in conjunction with the exam mark to calculate the overall award grade
- more resources and time would have to be devoted to grading.

*This is a reasonably well run school...but every single teacher in this school is on the minimum free time just now and many of them are sitting in classes with either a maximum of 20 or a maximum of 30. Now to then say to people, you have got to take on more responsibility for correction, then you've either got to provide more teachers, or you've got to provide more free time, some manner of means. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

4.32 Other concerns expressed by these respondents mainly related to issues with the practicality of grading units which are discussed below.

#### ***Reasons for disagreement with the proposal***

4.33 The main reasons for disagreement related to practical issues - with workload implications being the most common one. This issue was widely raised by teachers and college lecturers who felt it would increase the time spent on marking. Some parents questioned whether marking would be fair given the time pressures faced by teachers.

*Time is so precious for teachers in marking day to day pieces of work that having to grade units would use up more valuable time, which we sadly don't have. (Teacher, consultation response)*

4.34 Other issues related to the practicality of grading units included:

- problems with developing a standardised approach to grading potentially leading to inconsistencies between subjects and between different schools/colleges
- a system of external moderation would have to be put in place to ensure consistency and credibility; this will again lead to an increase in workload as well as costs.

4.35 Respondents who opposed grading were also concerned about the increased pressure this will put on teachers and pupils to achieve high grades. It was noted that this could potentially lead to over-assessment and to a culture of teaching or learning to the test at the expense of genuine learning and support. A few stated that such effects are contrary to the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

*No that's kind of annoying every like month you're having to work for an A, work for an A and work for an A. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

*Grading all units in a qualification will not meet the CfE's overall aim of reducing assessment burden but it is likely to increase it for the majority. (Scotland's Colleges, consultation response)*

- 4.36 Moreover it was noted that grades could be distorted by teachers giving inflated grades, pupils re-sitting unit assessments until they improved their grades or pupils sitting all their unit assessments at the end of a course.

*If unit passes are to be graded, we foresee multiple re-sits being demanded to get as high a score as possible with consequent workload problems for staff. [...] even if restrictions are to be placed on the number of re-sits, a pragmatic response might be to hold all unit tests until the end of the course to achieve as high a grade as possible – would easily overload and burnout pupils near the end of the year. (School Leaders Scotland, consultation response)*

#### **Q4. Do you want graded units to count towards the final award?**

4.37 Most (1661 out of 1807) respondents provided an answer to this question. Just over half (51%) of all respondents did not want graded units to count towards the final award, whereas 40% were supportive of this.

4.38 The findings from the consultation analysis and the qualitative research indicate that respondents from secondary schools and colleges were more likely than others to disagree with the proposal.

4.39 Pupils and parents typically agreed with the proposal but some only wanted graded units to count for appeal purposes.

#### **Reasons for agreement**

4.40 A common perception among those who agreed was that the proposed system – graded units counting towards the final award – was fairer because it takes into account pupils' achievements throughout a course. This was seen to be particularly beneficial for pupils who do not perform well under exam conditions or just happen to have a 'bad day' on the day of the exam.

*Yes because I do better in class than I do in exams. You're more nervous in the exams. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

*That would be useful, because then you can get some of it out of the way. Because right now it is 100% on the exam. You might have a bad day. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

4.41 Others agreed because they felt that there is no point in grading at all if grades are not taken into account when determining the final award.



*I think it would be pretty pointless if they were doing units and getting graded throughout the year if they didn't count. (Parent, qualitative research)*

- 4.42 Consistent with the arguments in favour of grading units (Question 3), respondents believed that pupils would take units more seriously under the proposed system. Thus they would be motivated to work harder and more consistently throughout the year as opposed to 'cramming' before the exam.

*I think it would maintain pupil performance throughout the year, rather than cramming into the final exam, you know kids scraping past the entire year then cramming like crazy before May. (Teacher, qualitative research).*

### **Caveats for agreement**

- 4.43 Although parents and pupils in the qualitative research were mostly supportive of the proposal, a number disapproved of penalising pupils who did very well in the final exam but not so well in the units. These respondents felt that pupils who achieve a high grade at the final exam have 'earned it' therefore should be awarded it and not be downgraded because of their poor performance during the units.

*But then this whole thing is about children then you shouldn't take the marks off them if they've done well in the exam and they didn't do quite so well throughout the year, because it could have been circumstances. (Parent, qualitative research)*

- 4.44 Parents and pupils tended to conclude that the system should enable pupils to achieve the best grade possible. In such a system, whether unit grades counted would depend on whether that would be to the individual pupil's advantage. If a pupil had done very well in the exam but not so well in the units, the unit grades would not count. If a pupil had done better in the units than the exam, they would count.

*It would be good if you could have a fall back, but if you wanted to stick with the marks you got in your final exam then you could. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- 4.45 Other caveats expressed by some, mainly by respondents from secondary schools, were:

- graded units should only be used for appeal purposes
- measures such as external moderation or external grading of units will need to be put in place to ensure that the system is fair and credible
- graded units should only constitute a small percentage of the final award.

### **Reasons for disagreement**

- 4.46 Those who opposed the proposal were concerned about the potential negative implications it may have for pupils. These respondents felt that instead of

motivating pupils it would actually demotivate them - pupils who perform very well throughout the year would not study as hard towards the final exam because they know they are going to pass well. In contrast, pupils who achieve low scores for units would not bother either as their chances of obtaining a higher grade are diminished.

*... people would think if they had three As for their NABS they wouldn't need to bother doing very much. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*[...] other ones would be completely demoralised, having two Ds in a row, thinking I'm never going to make this. (College lecturer, qualitative research)*

- 4.47 Another problem pointed out was that pupils tend to do less well at the beginning of a course because it takes time to develop understanding and skills. Also pupils often lack maturity at the start to deal with the course material. Taking early units into account would tend to reduce the overall grade and would not reflect the final level achieved by pupils.

*When they first start a course, the level of understanding might not be as good. We hope, by the end of the course they'll have deeper level of understanding. Therefore if they did grade, you'll probably find the earlier ones might be a lower grade and the later ones might be a higher grade, because they can see the linkages and might be able to understand it more. So they build up their skills plus the maturity with age as well. (College lecturer, qualitative research)*

- 4.48 A number of respondents also felt that the proposal would disadvantage pupils who receive less support at home.

*Private tutors would be employed by those who could afford it to ensure A grades in the units giving more advantages to students who come from already advantaged backgrounds. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- 4.49 The credibility of internal assessment was a further concern expressed by respondents who disagreed with the proposal. Similar to arguments made against grading units (Question 3), teachers and college lecturers in particular felt that internal assessment is open to abuse by allowing pupils to re-sit units to improve their grades and pupils submitting work that it is not their own.

*Internal assessment is open to abuse in unscrupulous centres [...] where every student in some centres copied the results from the board. Unscrupulous tutors have also been "teaching the NABS" and this has resulted in some students achieving almost full marks in NABS and achieving 10% in an unseen prelim. (Teacher, consultation response)*

4.50 Moreover, it was noted that, by having graded units counting towards the final award, this would greatly increase pressure on teachers to allow pupils to resit unit assessments to improve their grades.

*We already have pressure on us when the assessments are assessed internally as part of the final grade, things like graphic communications. Where that happens, parents want this done again and again, putting pressure on staff to re-assess and re-assess. If that was to happen across the board, it would be a very, very great pressure on teachers in school. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

4.51 Less commonly cited reasons related to practical issues. Once again, these were broadly consistent with the reasons given by respondents who disagreed with the proposal to grade units (Question 3) and included a concern that existing issues associated with the administration of NABS (e.g. the need to co-ordinate delivery) could be exacerbated.

**Q5. Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support? Please select one option or suggest an alternative.**

- Option A**    **Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E.**
- Option B**    **Recognise unit passes only.**
- Option C**    **Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded.**
- Option D**    **Compensatory grade ‘C’ award at the level of course below that studied.**
- Option E**    **Compensatory grade ‘A’ award at the level of course below that studied.**

4.52 Almost all (1645 out of 1807) respondents answered this question. Overall, option B was the most popular option: 47% of all respondents selected option B, 15% selected option A, 10% selected option D, 9% selected option C and 5% selected option E.

4.53 Around half of respondents from secondary schools, universities and local authorities and three quarters of respondents from colleges selected option B. A slightly smaller proportion of parents and employers/business representatives selected this option but it was still their most popular choice. These two groups also had substantial proportions in support of option A. Employers who took part in the qualitative research preferred option B although option A was also popular. However, there was also a feeling that any compensatory award would be unsatisfactory for employers’ purposes. It was thought that although pupils should be rewarded for hard work, in practice, compensatory awards indicate that a pupil has failed a course and would be treated as such in recruitment.

4.54 Pupils who took part in the qualitative research typically supported option B although opinion was varied. A few felt that option E was the best. However, other pupils held the view that E was the worst option.

### ***Support for compensatory awards in principle***

4.55 Respondents generally felt that there should be some kind of compensatory arrangement in place for pupils who have passed their unit assessments throughout the course but failed the final exam. The main reasons cited were:

- that they recognise the hard work pupils have carried out during the year
- that they maintain the idea of certification for all, ensuring that very few pupils leave with no qualifications.

### ***Disagreement with compensatory arrangements in principle***

4.56 Some respondents disagreed with the principle of compensatory awards. The main issues that arose in opposition to the idea of a compensatory arrangement were:

- that pupils need to be allowed to fail so they are aware it is possible, preparing them for the real world and how to deal with failure

*We need young people, and older people, to understand that it is possible to fail; to be resilient about failure so that they try again or in another direction; to be positively aware that we cannot all be competent physicists, cooks, engineers, novelists or footballers; to make the right choices. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- that even if pupils are given compensatory awards, a 'fail is still a fail' and will not be considered good enough for recruitment and course entrance requirements. This was a view held by employers and universities in particular.

*To be perfectly honest I think it's pretty worthless in so much that most employers will look at 'A' to 'C' as being a pass. (Employer, qualitative research)*

### ***Option A (selected by 15% of all respondents) - Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E***

#### ***Reasons for selecting option A***

4.57 The main reasons given for agreeing with option A were:

- that it recognises a pupil's achievement and hard work

*['D' and 'E' grades] what it does is it gives pupils something to show for the years they've been studying. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- that it is clear cut and simple for people to understand, especially employers

*Well if it's something you want employers to understand they've got to avoid over complicating it and if you see their gradings 'A' to 'E', then for most people that's probably relatively straightforward (Employer, qualitative research)*

*I would say option A is more clear cut for ourselves as employers.  
(Employer, qualitative research)*

#### *Caveats for agreement with option A*

4.58 One of the main caveats to this option was that many respondents would like to see option A offered alongside option B - so a grade is given but the units that have been passed are also listed.

4.59 Another issue that arose was that option A was often the default choice for respondents. It was seen by some as the least bad choice rather than being an option that was actively supported.

#### *Objections to option A*

4.60 The main concerns raised about option A were:

- the 'D' and particularly the 'E' grade will have no currency with employers, universities or colleges and will be seen as a fail

*It doesn't mean anything. With loads of 'E' grades, you can't go off to university, you can't go off and do anything with it and I mean a potential employer will look at a 'D' already and will know it's a fail. It means you've done the units and you've done your best, but it's still a fail so why do we need an 'E'? (College Student, qualitative research)*

- there was a feeling from some respondents that a pupil might prefer to have no grade shown on their certificate rather than a grade as low as an 'E'.

*A grade E is rubbish - I have a Grade E at O Level Biology and I don't tell a soul! It's embarrassing and I would rather not mention my "failure". If I see it like that, so will others. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- respondents raised the concern that this option would result in the 'certification of failure' rather than celebrating success

*['E' grade] it's a certificate of failure rather than a certificate of success and one of the advantages of the current certification is that it is weighted towards successful courses that are recorded, rather than excessive failure. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

4.61 It was clear from the qualitative research that, although some employers felt that in principle option A was easy to understand, in practice it holds little use for recruitment purposes. This indicates that pupils' and secondary schools respondents' concerns over the value of such an award are well founded.

*How useful is the 'E' person to me, what has he done in all of that course work to end up being an 'E'? Has he only just scraped by his*

*continual assessment and made a poor hash of the exam?  
(Employer, qualitative research)*

#### *Caveats for opposition to option A*

4.62 Although many respondents felt that the 'E' grade was meaningless and would have no external currency, there was greater support for retaining the near miss 'D' grade in line with current procedures.

4.63 One view from secondary school respondents was that gaining a 'D' grade shows that pupils have made an effort to pass the exam and have worked hard. It was not considered to be simply an award for course completion in the same way that an 'E' grade was.

*But at least if they've got a 'D' they haven't just written their name on the paper, they've actually made an attempt. I think that should be reflected. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

#### **Option B (selected by 47% of all respondents) - Recognise unit passes only**

##### *Reasons for selecting Option B*

4.64 Option B was by far the most popular option overall. The main reasons given for selecting option B were that:

- it recognises the hard work that pupils have put in throughout the whole course

*I do think that they should be rewarded for their hard work in achieving unit grades. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- it gives credit for achievements reached at the level studied (unlike options D and E) and for this reason was thought to be the fairest and most transparent option

*Option B is our preferred option as it reflects actual achievement. We are strongly opposed to Options D and E since they give an award where none is merited. (Secondary school department, consultation response)*

*Yes, what have they actually achieved not what's been fudged potentially behind the scenes to give them something. (Employer, qualitative research)*

##### *Caveats and concerns from those in agreement with option B*

4.65 Although option B was the most popular option, a few respondents had some reservations about this choice. The main caveats from those who, overall, supported option B were:

- as previously stated, that it should be given in combination with another award such as extending the grading to a 'D' or 'E' (option A)
- that units should be graded as this would provide a better picture of a pupil's achievement, making units more meaningful to both pupils and external users such as employers. This issue is discussed in more detail in the section on Q3.

4.66 Pupils and teachers in the qualitative research were typically in favour of grading units if they were to be used as a compensatory arrangement. Some pupils felt that grading units would give a better indication of the level a student was working at before the final exam.

*I think it would be good if they were graded because I think it gives an indication as to where that pupil has been for the duration of the course and perhaps if there were circumstances surrounding the reason why they didn't pass the exam (Teacher, qualitative research)*

4.67 However, some headteachers felt that this would be too complicated to be of practical use to employers.

*I think trying to differentiate really between pupils capability in an area based on graded units without an overall final award I don't think would be helpful. I think everybody would find that incredibly complicated. Is unit one easier, harder, than unit three? (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

4.68 Other concerns mirrored the reasons given below by those who opposed option B.

#### *Objections to option B*

4.69 The most common reason given for opposing option B, which emerged mainly from the qualitative research but was also raised by respondents to the consultation, was that units would have no meaning or value beyond the course itself. This was a concern for teachers, pupils and employers. Some employers suggested that they would need to know more about the content of units to ascertain if the skill and knowledge pupils gain from these would have any use in the workplace.

*I am not convinced from anything that I've seen in the proposals or my previous understanding about the Higher Still unit assessments, that actually it meant terribly much to anybody beyond their course. During the course of progression towards the end point exam it has meaning and relevance but certainly, for external scrutiny, unit passes will mean, from a personal point of view, nothing. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

4.70 Another concern raised by employers was that individual unit scores would be very complex. This would be a particular problem for the readability of CVs.

*I just think it ends up confusing for people sending in their CV, it ends up with a very unruly CV. You want somebody's qualifications to be short, you don't want to be taking up a page with all the different units on it. (Employer, qualitative research)*

**Option C (selected by 9% of all respondents) - Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded**

*Reasons for selecting option C*

4.71 Option C was not popular. However, a few respondents saw some benefit to this choice. The main benefit cited was that it acknowledges that the pupil has completed the course.

*Objections to option C*

4.72 There was much more opposition to option C than support and the main reasons provided for this were:

- that it could be confusing to employers. They may think a pupil has passed a qualification when they have not

*The option where something appears on their certificate, English General with no grade, an employer is going to look at that and think, 'oh they've got that', they won't be aware that there isn't a grade at the right hand side and it doesn't count, so you would have to be pretty clued into the qualification system to realise that they sat it, but didn't pass it. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- that if employers do understand option C they would see it as a fail and give no value to the award. It would be considered a certificate of attendance only.

*That would count against them, just straight away, that would count against them in the work environment straight away. That option C would be immediately stigmatized by recruiters. (Employer, qualitative research)*

**Option D (selected by 10% of all respondents) - Compensatory grade C award at the level of course below that studied.**

**Option E (selected by 5% of all respondents) - Compensatory grade A award at the level of course below that studied.**

*Reasons for selecting options D and E*

4.73 Although not popular options there was support from some respondents for options D and E. These respondents, particularly pupils, thought that a student would only study a higher level if they were capable of work at that level and therefore would be able to pass the level below.



*... you are studying at the level above then you are obviously able to do the level above, then if you are going to a level below then you are at least getting good marks for it. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

#### *Caveats for agreement with options D and E*

4.74 Those that agreed with options D and E did so with some reservations. The main concerns that were raised were:

- that there would need to be clear evidence that articulation between levels is sufficient to legitimately award a grade at the lower qualification if a pupil has just missed passing the higher level

*I can't make that decision without knowing how the coursework in Advanced General relates to General and whether the 'A' in a General, does relate to a 48% in Advanced? So I can't answer that question (Employer, qualitative research)*

- that there should also be the option of offering a B grade at the level below

*I guess it depends on what mark you got like how bad you failed it. If you just failed it by a couple of marks, get an 'A'. If you failed it miserably you get a 'C', in the middle a 'B', makes more sense (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- that the awarding of a compensatory grade at the level below would depend on how well the pupil had actually performed in their final exam. It would only be appropriate to award a grade if pupils had reached a certain level of competence

*Option E, then I think I would prefer that as long as demonstration had been made through the units and through prelims or whatever that this was indeed somebody who had just missed out on the level above. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- employers were divided on whether the fact that an award is compensatory should appear on a candidate's certificate.

#### *Objections to options D and E*

4.75 The main reasons given for opposition to D and E were:

- that the 'safety net' of compensation would lead to inappropriate presentation at a higher level

*Option E is unacceptable and has been proven in practice to lead to presentation at inappropriate levels. (Educational Institute of Scotland, consultation response)*

- that pupils would become demotivated and would not put in the required effort if they know they will get an award anyway

*I mean if they want people to try for the exams they don't want to be doing that, I mean I wouldn't work if I knew I was going to get an 'A' at Intermediate Two. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- that they are unfair to pupils working towards and achieving the lower level qualification. It was considered that giving out as a 'consolation prize' the qualification that some have worked hard to achieve detracts from their success

*Compensatory grades feel unfair to us. They could be seen to diminish the value of the effort of those who did tackle the exam at the lower level (Secondary school, consultation response)*

- that pupils should not be awarded a qualification that they have not sat an exam for or even studied. Respondents thought that it would be unjust and illogical for pupils to be given an award that they did not earn

*The clear preference was that we offer certification and recognition for work done... We do not believe that young people should be offered compensation through a course that they have not studied or through study at a different level from that at which they have operated and on that basis Option B is the preferred one. (Association of Directors of Education Scotland, consultation response)*

- that different levels of the same subject often contain very different material. A pupil studying at the higher level would not necessarily have passed the qualification at the level below because they have not covered the material

*Compensatory grades at lower levels are not appropriate as the courses studied at different levels cover not merely a lesser quantity of knowledge but qualitatively different areas and types of understanding. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- that compensatory awards such as these have been tried and discarded in the past
- that, in practical terms, it is possible that pupils will already have a better pass at the level below and so the compensatory award would be worthless or confusing
- that these awards appear to be a reward for failing.

4.76 In terms of specific arguments against options D and E it was felt that awarding an 'A' at the level below was too high and that a 'C' was too low. As previously mentioned some respondents felt that a 'B' grade would be more appropriate

while others felt that the particular grade should depend on the level of attainment.

4.77 While few respondents placed option D as their top choice, it was preferred to option E. The many arguments presented by opponents of options D and E were thought to apply to a much greater extent if the grade given at the level below was an 'A' rather than a 'C'.

### ***Alternatives to existing options***

4.78 Some respondents felt that none of the above options were appropriate. The main suggestions for alternatives were:

- if pupils perform badly in the final exam they should use the evidence based appeals system
- pupils should be given the opportunity to resit exams
- there should simply be an award for course completion
- some respondents would like to see a combination of option A and B making up a compensatory award
- pupils should sit exams at two levels (in line with common practice in Standard Grade) to give them a safety net at the lower level
- pupils should be awarded an 'A', 'B' or 'C' grade at the level below dependent on how well they have performed overall.

### **Q6. The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5).**

**Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not, please offer an alternative and explain your choice.**

4.79 Almost all (1679 out of 1807) answered this question. The majority were not in favour: 71% of all respondents disagreed while 21% agreed.

4.80 Employers who responded to the consultation were more likely than other groups to agree with the proposed names. However, this was not replicated in the qualitative research, in which all groups were typically against the proposal.

4.81 Around a third (594) of those responding to the consultation provided alternative suggestions.

4.82 Respondents had views on the criteria the names should meet, although they acknowledged the difficulty in finding suitable names. They felt that the names should:

- be positive
- be simple
- avoid confusion with the current names
- be meaningful i.e. provide an indication of the level achieved
- fit well within the naming structure of the other SCQF qualifications.

4.83 The perceived significance of the names varied, with employers and teachers feeling more strongly than other groups that they were important in conveying the meaning of the qualification to the public and, in particular, employers.

***Reasons for disagreement with the proposed names and reasons for alternative suggestions***

4.84 There was a sense that respondents found the proposed names uninspiring.

4.85 There was also a view that the names were meaningless as they did not provide an indication of what level had been attained. It was suggested that this would be better achieved by including the SCQF levels in the names, for example, Scottish Certificate (of Education) Level 4 and 5.

*These names do not give a direct indication of what the learning they are accrediting means. The change to bring in the use of the Curriculum for Excellence provides an ideal opportunity to move from an emphasis on different qualifications types to a focus on the levels and credits a qualification attracts on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Thus a Scottish National Qualification at SCQF 4 or a Scottish National Qualification at SCQF Level 5 provides information on both the type of award and level needed by receiving employers or learning providers. (Scotland's Colleges, consultation response)*

*Wider use of SCQF level - keep it simple and use SCQF Level 4 and SCQF Level 5. If this is the standard for our entire education system make pupils, parents, teachers and employers more aware of this broader framework. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

***Specific issues with the name General***

4.86 There were two main issues with the proposed name General being used for the new award at SCQF level 4:

- the literal meaning of the word and the associated connotations that it brings to mind: 'boring', 'average', 'dull' and 'meaningless'.
  - *It's almost like saying average [...]*
  - *It makes you sound the same as everybody else.*
  - *Nothing special. (Pupils, qualitative research)*

*I mean general, doesn't give a person much motivation, it sounds you're average, so what do they gain what do they aim for, well if I'm average then I'm average and they could be demotivated by it I suppose. (Employer, qualitative research)*

- confusion with the current names. It was suggested that the names should either be kept the same as they are now i.e. General and Credit or be

changed to something completely different: keeping just one part of the name was seen as the most confusing option.

*Why not leave it as credit and general? [...] Far easier, straightforward, no problems, no hassle, just leave it at that. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*Employers will be confused. If someone who applies for a job has a General pass at the old S" Grade, it will be difficult to differentiate them from someone who has achieved the new General qualification. Please please use a name that has never been utilised in the Scottish system before. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

### **Specific issues with the name Advanced General**

4.87 The suggestion to call the qualification at SCQF level 5 Advanced General also raised concerns. These included:

- the combination of the words 'advanced' and 'general'. Respondents felt that the two words did not fit well together as their meanings contradict each other.

*I just find advanced general [...] two conflicting words, you are either general or advanced and you can't be both. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*Advanced General sounds almost like an oxymoron - "Superior Ordinary" (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

- a lack of clarity that Advanced General was a distinct level, above General, and not just a very high grade at the same level. There was a view that calling it Credit or Merit would better highlight the difference between the two qualifications.

*I think that SCQF 4 should be General but that SCQF 5 should be Credit as this would more clearly signify to both candidates and employers etc, that SCQF 5 was at a higher level than SCQF 4. (Secondary School Employee, consultation response)*

Keeping the names Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 was also suggested as a way to show clearly the two levels.

*I think calling it Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2, it makes it dead easy to understand the levels, there are different levels. (Employer, qualitative research)*

- Advanced General suggests that the qualifications are progressions rather than alternatives. While some pupils might take a progressive route through them, it is likely that many will do an Advanced General qualification without having done the General qualification in that subject. Part of the reason for

this confusion comes from the view that pupils have to pass a Higher in a subject in order to do an Advanced Higher.

*...I think that's why I think you should maybe change the name because people will get confused, because they've got to do Higher and then Advanced Highers, they might think they've got to do General and the Advanced General. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- the use of the word 'advanced' is unsuitable for a qualification at SCQF level 5 as it is not an advanced qualification.

*The term 'Advanced' should be kept for qualifications at Level SCQF 7, in line with Advanced Higher, GCE Advanced Level, and European national HE entry level qualifications which distinguish between subjects taken at an Advanced Level, or a more basic/general level. (Universities Scotland, consultation response)*

- it does not fit well within the existing qualification structure. It is misleading because the qualification at SCQF level 6, Higher, does not have 'Advanced' in the name. It could, therefore, be construed that Advanced General is above Higher.

*I don't know about this Advanced General, I think the public, never mind teachers, would have considerable difficulty coming to terms with a level 5 having advanced and then level 6 not being called advanced, but then level 7 being advanced again, I think a better title could be found. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

### **Alternative name suggestions**

4.88 Although respondents provided a range of alternative suggestions, these did not meet all of the criteria identified.

4.89 The most common alternative suggestions for the names of new awards were to:

- keep General for the award at SCQF level 4 and Credit for the award at SCQF level 5
- use SCQF levels. For example, Scottish Certificate (of Education) Level 4 and 5, Scottish Award Level 4; Scottish Award Level 5
- keep Intermediates 1 and 2.

4.90 Other suggestions included:

- Upper general (instead of Advanced General)
- Standard and Advanced Standard
- Ordinary grade
- Lower
- Bronze, silver and gold
- Advanced (instead of Advanced General)
- Access 4 and 5.

## **5 PROPOSAL 3 – NEW AWARDS IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY WILL BE AVAILABLE AT SCQF LEVELS 3 TO 5**

### **Summary of background information in the consultation paper**

5.1 Evidence from HMIE and other sources suggests that there is a need to be much more rigorous and explicit about the development and certification of essential skills, particularly literacy and numeracy. This requirement goes beyond pupils with specific difficulties to encompass all pupils, including those entering higher education. *Curriculum for Excellence* offers the opportunity to ensure that there is a sustained focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. To help strengthen this focus, the consultation proposed developing new awards to accredit literacy and numeracy skills – the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy. The expectation is that all young people will be presented for these awards unless there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so. The awards should also be made available in the college sector to provide post-school and adult learners with the opportunity to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and be accredited for their achievements.

5.2 The proposed features of the new awards are as follows:

- There will be separate awards for literacy and numeracy, both available at SCQF levels 3 to 5. This will enable as many individuals as possible to attain an appropriate level of award. Schools and colleges should be mindful of the need to strike an appropriate balance between providing opportunities for individuals to demonstrate a higher level of achievement and imposing an unnecessary assessment burden. For example, the Scottish Government does not expect individuals to be presented for these awards in every year from S4 to S6.
- The awards will accredit a broad range of skills in literacy and numeracy on the basis of internally assessed evidence from a young person's work across the curriculum and an externally assessed examination. For those who have already left school and/or have not experienced the revised curriculum, the internally assessed element of the awards would draw upon work done in college, employment or through social, voluntary and cultural activities. The consultation requested views on whether there should be equal weight between the internal and external assessments, more weight given to the internal assessment or more weight given to the external assessment.
- To promote consistency, the Scottish Certificate for Literacy and the Scottish Certificate for Numeracy will be graded in the same way as other National Qualifications.

5.3 In taking forward detailed proposals for the awards, the Scottish Government will work with SQA and stakeholder groups to ensure that the new awards complement revised qualifications in English and Mathematics at SCQF levels 3 to 5. It will be necessary to revise the English and Mathematics qualifications to reflect the changes caused by the introduction of awards in literacy and numeracy. The consultation suggested that this provides an opportunity for

English and Mathematics courses to focus on areas of learning which are not presently covered in depth.

**Q7. Do you agree with the proposal to offer literacy and numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5)? If not please offer an alternative.**

- 5.4 Almost all (1688 out of 1807) respondents answered this question. Overall, a majority were in favour: 61% of all respondents agreed while 30% disagreed. Around a third of those who agreed did so with caveats.
- 5.5 Around three in five respondents from secondary schools were in favour of the proposal.
- 5.6 Most young people's representatives were in favour of the proposal while most Teachers' Associations were not.
- 5.7 A majority of parents who responded to the consultation were in favour of the awards. Parents who participated in the qualitative research were divided, with parents of children likely to go straight into employment after leaving school typically in favour of the awards and parents of children likely to go to university typically against the awards.
- 5.8 Colleges who responded to the consultation were more likely than other groups to be in favour of the proposal. However, college lecturers who took part in the qualitative research were typically against it.
- 5.9 Pupils who took part in the qualitative research were more split as to whether they agreed with the proposal. Those who were against the awards tended to be the more able pupils.
- 5.10 College students who took part in the qualitative research were in favour of the awards.
- 5.11 Employer bodies who responded to the consultation were strongly in favour of the awards. Employers who took part in the qualitative research were more divided.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

5.12 The main reasons cited for agreeing with the proposal were that:

- **literacy and numeracy are essential skills for life**

*These skills are the building blocks of learning and therefore educational/life success - they should be given prominence in learning. (Secondary school employee, consultation response)*

*I certainly think considering the life skills it's important and I think it is the whole handling money, what is a bank account, what is a credit account, how do you manage that, just all these life skills are so important. (Employer, qualitative research)*



- **it recognises literacy and numeracy as separate skills from English and Maths and provides a measurement of these skills which is useful for employers and colleges**

*...literacy and numeracy awards offer learners a way of accrediting their competence, providers a way of gauging the success of their provision and employers and receiving educational institutions a measure of an individual's capabilities. (Scotland's Colleges, consultation response)*

*A Scottish Certificate for Literacy and a Scottish Certificate for Numeracy would help small employers assess these crucial basic skills in potential employees. (Federation of Small Businesses, consultation response)*

This was seen as particularly important for pupils who do not perform well in English and Maths as the proposals offer them the option not to take qualifications in these subjects.

*For me Maths has always been my weakness, so for me that would be fantastic, it would really give you much more confidence and I think [...] Maths is something a lot of people find really difficult, the same with the English, a feeling that you're competent in it, at least for every day sort of things would be fantastic. (College student, qualitative research)*

Employers commented that, for some jobs, literacy and numeracy qualifications rather than English and Maths would suffice.

- **it will encourage the development of these skills across the curriculum, which will help pupils to use these skills in a range of contexts.**

*It will be good for just promoting transferable skills, so you don't have to, to be doing Maths you don't need to be in the Maths classroom, to be writing you don't have to be in the English classroom. I suppose it will sort of promote that and get them to use the skills they have in a different context. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

### **Caveats and concerns from those in agreement**

5.13 Firstly, it should be noted that a number of respondents did not feel they had sufficient information about the proposal to provide a definitive response.

5.14 While many respondents agreed, in principle, with the idea that literacy and numeracy skills should be developed across the curriculum, a range of challenges and concerns were identified. These are discussed below.

- **Practical and resource implications in organising the teaching and assessment**

Teachers, in particular, had concerns that bringing together a pupil's work across subjects in order to provide an internal assessment would be time-consuming.

*...if it is a folio of evidence to match up with the different skills in numeracy and literacy and all of that has to be collated from across the curriculum for a pupil, that is a large task to do and I don't know who is going to do that, given the staffing levels in the school. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

They felt that current staffing levels would not be adequate to cover this additional work and that, unless additional resources were provided, it would be left to the English and Maths teachers to organise.

*The administration of such awards (the exam preparation, the results analysis, exam appeals etc) would be difficult. It seems like it would be an added burden for the Principal Teachers of Maths and English as, although there is a push to make all teachers responsible for these subjects, ultimately it will fall to Maths and English Departments. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

Further workload concerns for English and Maths teachers were raised in relation to the need for English and Maths courses to be rewritten due to the potential duplication with the literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The proposal not to have separate literacy and numeracy classes raised concerns about the proposed external exam; how can pupils sit an exam in something where they have not attended any classes, who would prepare pupils for sitting the exam and where is the space in the curriculum to do so? Teachers were open about the fact that schools were likely to offer separate literacy and numeracy classes in order to overcome these issues.

*Of course the other problem is, if there are no literacy or numeracy classes and therefore nobody is technically accountable other than everybody being accountable, they can't really study up for it, the same way they might study up for something else and get it. You didn't pass it who do you go to?*

*This is why there will be classes and they will be within the maths department and they will be in the English department, whatever you say about people being responsible for all of it. (Teachers, qualitative research)*

The assessment methods will be covered in more detail in the section on Question 9.

- **The role of other subject teachers in teaching and assessing these skills**

There was a view that there would need to be a significant culture shift to persuade some teachers that it is not just the job of English and Maths teachers to teach literacy and numeracy.

*Is your average teacher going to break his guts to try to ensure that the pupil gets the numeracy award, or [...], the literacy award? [...] Teachers will work and work and work very often to see their own kids, in their classroom, in their subject, coming through well and get a real buzz out of a good set of examination results, because there is that sense of ownership you are personally involved in the whole process. I suspect with something like literacy and numeracy you are not going to get that involvement. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

It was acknowledged that other teachers were already supporting the teaching of these skills without necessarily being aware of it. However, it was felt (particularly by other subject teachers) that there was a difference between doing this and formally assessing these skills; many felt that they had not received adequate training and therefore would not feel confident about doing so. They frequently commented that they had only been trained to teach their particular subject and that those who had been trained to teach literacy and numeracy would do a better job.

*For the examples of literacy and numeracy here, things like teaching fractions, now I can do fractions myself in my own way, but if I was trying to teach fractions to pupils, I would find that extremely difficult, whereas somebody with specialist knowledge of teaching maths could do a far better job than I could and I worry about non specialist literacy and numeracy [teachers] trying to embed the curriculum and making it successful and in fact, we might make a monumental failure on this one. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*Whilst it is a great idea and it is true we are all responsible for literacy, we don't have a teaching force that are skilled in teaching literacy, because most teachers, apart from maybe English teachers, have not come through any kind of training system whereby we have been taught how to teach literacy and develop the skills of literacy and understand it and to assess it, it's not something we have ever, ever done and for most teachers, they would find that extremely difficult to do. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- **concern that (almost) all pupils would be required to do them.** It was acknowledged that these would be useful qualifications for pupils doing less well in English and Maths.

*If you are not good at English and not good at Maths that would be good to have like a smaller sub course you could be taking. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

However, there was a view, mainly among parents and employers, that there was no logic in pupils who were going to gain good qualifications in English and Maths, doing literacy and numeracy qualifications. Although these pupils would not be required to attend classes in literacy and numeracy, the fact that they would have to do assessments was seen as a waste of both pupils' and teachers' time.

*Nor is it clear that they will be of any particular value for those who are heading for externally assessed examinations in mathematics and/or English. Sufficient competence in numeracy and literacy will be subsumed in these examinations. (Scottish Mathematics Council, consultation response)*

Additionally, there was a view that the proposed requirement for (almost) all pupils to take the awards conflicted with the other proposals to increase flexibility and encourage the bypassing of lower qualifications.

- **concern that the awards will not be valued.** Closely linked to above point was a concern that the awards would be not valued by employers, colleges or universities. This was evidenced by comments such as:

*it could be argued that these awards are unnecessary for students who progress to achieving Higher English and Higher Mathematics respectively [...] From a university perspective, a key issue is that students subsequently progressing to Higher English and Higher Mathematics are not delayed in commencing Higher level work by 'unnecessary' engagement with lower-level literacy and numeracy activities. (Universities Scotland, consultation response)*

*We also query whether employers and other end-users will ignore the literacy and numeracy levels achieved by pupils as they accumulate qualifications at a later point at S4, S5 or S6: are we putting pupils through another set of examination hoops for no significant gain? (School Leaders Scotland, consultation response)*

Regardless, the need to inform employers so that they understand the new awards was identified.

- **concern that English and Maths would no longer be seen as compulsory in certain schools.** Although this was seen by some as a positive feature of the proposed awards, some respondents were concerned that the introduction of the literacy and numeracy awards will encourage schools to move away from the current practice of making English and Maths compulsory. Many wish this practice to remain, at least for all but the very few who found them too challenging. Pupils, particularly those wanting to go to university, had concerns in relation to university entrance requirements. They were aware that, currently, the majority of courses required them to have qualifications in these subjects and they also felt that they were important life skills to have.

Pupils also expressed a concern that, when choosing their subjects, some pupils will lack the maturity to see the long term benefits of taking qualifications in English and Maths and might decide not to do so simply because they don't enjoy them. Teachers would need to ensure that this did not happen.

*...when you are choosing to do it, I think you would have to talk to, like a guidance teacher or someone, because when you are say 14 or something, a lot of people are going to say, oh I'll do this, I don't have*

*to do Maths and then realise two years later, I should have done Maths. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

Parents agreed that they would want their children to continue to do English and Maths as they saw them as the most important subjects.

Teachers, in particular, were worried that pupils would miss out on important aspects of learning, for example, English literature.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that not having to study English and Maths after S3 would mean that pupils would actually miss out on literacy and numeracy teaching as there was a perception that these were the subjects that would place most focus on these skills.

- **concern about having awards at three levels.** Among those who agreed with the awards, opinion varied on this issue, from those who thought there should only be one level offered to those content with three levels and those who were in favour of more than three levels. The main reason cited by those who believed that there should only be one level offered was that if these are basic competencies it is not necessary (or even logical) to offer them at three different levels. It was felt that one test was adequate and that pupils' awards should depend on how well they did in it. Having just one level would also avoid teachers and pupils having to reach agreement on which level the pupils should sit.

*...that doesn't make sense, why [do] you get different levels of numeracy, you can either do it or you can't. (Parent, qualitative research)*

*Do you have a case conference for every single pupil where all the staff sit down, all the teachers sit down in a room and say, let's go for level four? (Teacher, qualitative research)*

Those who felt that the range of levels offered should be extended had concerns, related to inclusivity and recognition of achievement, that there were no proposed literacy and numeracy awards for pupils working at Access Levels 1 and 2; are pupils who do not achieve them going to be labelled 'illiterate' and 'innumerate'?

*We question why awards in literacy/numeracy at Access 1/2 level are not to be offered. We feel this runs counter to the principles of inclusion and recognition of pupil achievement. (Dumfries and Galloway Council, consultation response)*

### ***Reasons for disagreement with the proposal***

5.15 Those who did not agree with the proposal acknowledged the fact that literacy and numeracy were important skills. However, they had fundamental doubts about the need to have awards in them. These included:

- **pupils should have these basic skills already.** The most common reason for disagreeing with the proposal was that pupils should already be taught these basic skills and that there was therefore no need for an award in them. Some felt strongly that pupils should have obtained these basic skills in primary school and that if they had there would be no need for these awards in the secondary curriculum.

*...Literacy and numeracy should be firmly embedded by the end of primary school (second level, under CfE). Children (with certain exceptions, those with profound ASL needs for example) should not enter their secondary schools (or third stage) until they are demonstrably functionally literate and numerate. (Individual, consultation response)*

Others questioned what was being covered in English and Maths if it was not literacy and numeracy skills.

*I think they are kind of like things you should learn in English and Maths. If you're not learning them in English and Maths then that is kind of worrying. What are you doing in English and Maths? (Pupil, qualitative research)*

*We already have effective tests of literacy and numeracy, called Standard Grade English and Maths! (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

Furthermore, there was a view among teachers that teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum was in place already as part of the Core Skills framework.

- **over-assessment.** While those in favour of the awards identified practical issues with the chosen assessment methods, those opposed had more basic concerns about the fact there would be assessment at all. There was a view that the requirement that (almost) all pupils will have to take these awards conflicts with the aim of reducing the burden of assessment and, more specifically, the proposal to allow the most able pupils to bypass lower qualifications. Concerns were raised about the increased workload for both pupils and teachers that introducing these awards would create. Cost implications were also mentioned.

*Our initial response to this proposal is why are more exams being added to the systems? If we are to meet the aspiration detailed in the report of the Curriculum Review Group that assessment supports learning, adding more exams than we currently have at present is not necessarily the best way to achieve that aspiration. (Perth & Kinross Education and Children's Services, consultation response)*

- **'teaching to the test'.** There was a view that having an element of external assessment will lead to teachers teaching pupils what they needed to know in

order to pass an exam as opposed to teaching for learning. This would also mean that less teaching time is available.

*It's this idea that the answer must be we'll give them another assessment, we'll give them another test, that in itself is flawed because what you'll find in that in each stage kids have been driven by testing, not been driven by education in Maths. (College lecturer, qualitative research)*

*There is agreement about the need to move away from any concept of "teaching to the test". It is ironic therefore that, in order to ensure the central role of literacy and numeracy, the mechanism chosen is precisely to create tests in these areas. A statement of ability in literacy and numeracy, as part of the end of S3 statement of achievement, would suffice to secure their centrality and would prevent the intrusion of an assessment-led imposition on the senior phase. (Educational Institute of Scotland, consultation response)*

5.16 Other reasons provided by those disagreeing with the proposal mirrored the caveats made by those who agreed with the awards discussed above. These included:

- practical and resource implications in organising the teaching and assessment
- prospect of schools moving away from the practice of making English and Maths compulsory
- whether the awards would be valued by employers, colleges and universities.

5.17 Finally, concerns were raised as to whether the literacy award would be achievable for pupils for whom English was not their first language and pupils who were dyslexic. How their performance in other subjects might be affected if literacy assessment is to be engrained across the curriculum was also a worry.

**Q8. National Qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) do not have an external examination. Do you agree that any new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an examination?**

- 5.18 Almost all (1661 out of 1807) answered this question. Overall, a small majority of those who expressed an opinion were in favour: 49% of all respondents agreed while 42% disagreed.
- 5.19 This question was not explored in the qualitative research with pupils, college students, employers and parents.
- 5.20 Half of secondary school respondents were in favour of the proposal while slightly fewer were opposed.
- 5.21 Colleges, universities and local authorities were more likely to disagree with the proposal.
- 5.22 It was apparent that this question was commonly misinterpreted and that some had answered more generally about whether there should be an external exam in literacy or numeracy at any level.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

5.23 By far the most common reasons cited for agreeing that the new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an external examination related to the credibility and value of the award. As internal assessment was seen to be more open to abuse by pupils, parents and teachers (as discussed in the sections on Questions 3, 4 and 9), not having an external assessment at all would mean a lack of quality assurance. Additionally, it was felt that there should be consistency in the assessment methods across the levels in the new awards.

*... the credibility of whatever they are awarded,[...] has to be consistent and understandable and unable to be doctored. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*They've got to be the same across the board, if the whole thing is about consistency and credibility, then if it's externally assessed then they're all externally assessed. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

5.24 Other reasons given related to inclusiveness. This has been identified as a positive feature of Standard Grades as pupils at level 3 taking of the same qualification as those at levels 4 and 5. There was a view that those at level 3 currently manage to achieve in the Standard Grade external exam and that this gives the qualification credibility.

5.25 Removing the exam for pupils at this level raised the following related concerns:

- external exams motivate both pupils and teachers and ensure that courses are taken seriously



- Children in mainstream schools can do exams.

- If you take away that then how are you going to keep them engaged?

- It excludes them even more if you don't even have an exam.  
(Teachers, qualitative research)

Often when it is decided that a pupil is presented only at Access 3 and they realise they do not sit an exam it is difficult to maintain motivation.  
(Secondary school teacher, consultation response)

I think children at this stage in their education need an external examination to bring home to them the seriousness of study and the need for education. Class tests and internal exams do not always, or seldom, have the same effect as an external exam. (Individual, consultation response)

- it boosts pupils' confidence

...I think that sitting exams is a good experience for people if they want to improve their confidence. If they are taken at a lower level then they are not seen by some as an elitist task. People will then have the courage to try more at a higher level and not be so intimidated.  
(Individual, consultation response)

### **Caveats and concerns from those in agreement**

5.26 A small proportion of those who agreed with the proposal did so with caveats. These included:

- the award must also comprise internal assessment
- concerns about who is preparing pupils for the exams (it was unclear if this was a concern specific to pupils working at this level or whether it was a concern at all levels)
- the exam does not have to take the form of a traditional external assessment (i.e. it could be done in the classroom or online) and it should be based more on skills than on retention

I think that examinations are important as they challenge young people, but it should not be a retention of knowledge, they should challenge the young person to use the skills they've developed.  
(Individual secondary teacher, consultation response)

### **Reason for disagreement with the proposal**

5.27 The main reason given by those who disagreed with the proposal was that external exams can be a barrier to attainment for pupils working at SCQF level

3 as they cannot cope with that form of assessment. Internal assessments were seen as being more suitable.

*No. I think the arguments for internal assessment, whether that's to be externally moderated or whatever, I think that should be maintained. I think for some pupils at that level, sitting a formal examination is not the best way of assessing their capability and performance, it is off-putting. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

5.28 For some of these pupils, disengagement with school and poor attendance means that they are at risk of not attending the final exam and therefore not obtaining a qualification at all.

*My Access pupils are vulnerable pupils - they have various learning issues and some have poor attendance. They achieve a good standard in short bursts of work which suits them. If they had to attend an examination I think they would not bother to turn up. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

5.29 The other main reason related to consistency at SCQF level 3: why should there be external exams in literacy and numeracy but not in other subjects at this level?

*Furthermore, it does not seem necessary to introduce external examinations for these awards, as this would diverge from the approach taken to other SCQF level 3 awards. (Universities Scotland, consultation response)*

5.30 Others commented on the costs involved in having an external exam for pupils at this level. There was a view that this did not justify any potential benefits.

### ***Caveats and concerns from those disagreeing with the proposal***

5.31 The main caveat from those who disagreed with the proposal was that there would have to be external moderation of the internal assessment to ensure that the award had credibility.

**Q9. Should weighting between the internal and external assessments for the Literacy and Numeracy awards be equal? If not, should more weight be attached to the internal or external assessment? (A) Equal weight (B) More weight to internal assessment (C) More weight to external assessment**

5.32 Most (1498 out of 1807) respondents replied to this question and just under half of all respondents (49%) stated that more weight should be given to external assessment (Option C). Eighteen per cent of respondents supported equal weighting (Option A) and 14% thought that more weight should be given to internal assessment (Option B).

5.33 Respondents from secondary schools were more likely than other groups to support Option C.

5.34 In the qualitative research, pupils and parents were broadly split between Option A (equal weighting) and Option B (more weight to internal assessment).

***Reasons for agreement with Option C (more weight to external assessment)***

5.35 Respondents who selected Option C believed that more weight should be given to external assessment so that the new awards are seen as credible qualifications. They felt that credibility is important so that these awards are recognised by employers and universities. Similar to the findings in relation to unit assessments (Questions 3 and 4), there were concerns over the robustness of internal assessment and it was felt to be open to abuse.

*I'm getting the impression continuous assessment is a wee bit of coaching with the tutor, oh you know that, come on, remember I told you, all right, then write the answer. (Employer, qualitative research)*

5.36 A closely related perception was that external assessment is necessary in order to ensure consistency across schools which would also have an impact on the credibility of the award.

*The more internal you have, the more difficult it is to ensure consistency. We have been down this road before with Standard Grades, where there were far more investigations assessed internally and gradually these were removed because of lack of confidence by the public, by teachers, by SQA, that an 'A' grade in one school was the same as an 'A' in another. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

***Caveats for agreement with Option C (more weight to external assessment)***

5.37 A number of respondents (including some who supported the other options) stated that they would prefer to have weighting adjusted depending on the level of the award so that more weight is given to internal assessment at level 3, equal weight at level 4 and more weight to external assessment at level 5. This was mainly suggested by respondents to the consultation document and the reasons for this are unclear. However, it might be that these respondents were taking into account the problems of external assessment for pupils at lower levels (as discussed at Question 8).

### **Reasons for agreement with Option A (equal weight)**

5.38 A common perception among those who agreed with Option A was that equal weighting was the fairer option. By placing equal emphasis on both types of assessments, it would give pupils who do well in exams a fair chance as well as those who do well in coursework.

*I just thought 50/50 was a fairer move. If they have done well all year then panicked when they went to the exam, or fell behind, or were worried about something, they were still getting their 50% for all the year's work which is better than nothing. (Parent, qualitative research)*

*It gives you a chance either way if you've not done so well throughout the year and then during the exam you do much better and it gives you a chance to still get a good grade. (College student, qualitative research)*

### **Reasons for agreement with Option B (more weight to internal assessment)**

5.39 A widespread reason among those in favour of Option B was that literacy and numeracy skills are best assessed through continuous internal assessment. In principle, these respondents felt that internal assessment is more in line with the day-to-day life skills and cross-curricular approach envisioned for these awards.

*These awards are to reflect a pupil's day-to-day achievements in literacy and numeracy that they will need for everyday life. It is only fitting therefore that most of the assessment is carried out in day-to-day situations; rather than letting it hang on a one-off examination. (Teacher, consultation response)*

5.40 The practical problems of putting together an examination paper that tests numeracy and literacy skills were also mentioned (by supporters of Option B and of Option A).

*I can't get my head round what the format of the exam would be, it's assessing skills that are visual, observable and day-to-day. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

**Q10. When should young people be assessed for literacy and numeracy awards?**

**Option A At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations**

**Option B In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations**

**Option C At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.**

5.41 Most respondents (1496 of 1807) answered this question. However, around a third of universities, employers/business representatives, colleges and parents did not answer.

5.42 Option A was the most popular option: 49% of all respondents selected option A, 3% selected option B, 20% selected option C and 9% felt that none of the above options were adequate. However, these numbers may be misleading - although option A was selected as the best of the three options by a large number of respondents, it appears from their comments that they would have chosen an alternative if it was on offer. Commonly suggested alternatives were that the awards should be taken earlier or that they should be taken when the pupil is ready.

5.43 Option A was the most popular option with all categories of respondents. This option was less popular with colleges, universities and employers than with other subgroups. Nonetheless, it was still their most common choice. Option C was the second most popular choice, although none of the employers/business representatives selected it. Option C was more popular with secondary school respondents than it was with parents, colleges, universities and local authorities. Pupils in the qualitative research were divided on the subject and could see the advantages and disadvantages of all three options.

5.44 Option B was very rarely selected as the preferred option. In fact, respondents were more likely to think that none of the suggested timings were acceptable than to choose option B. Colleges, universities and local authorities, in particular, felt that other options would be appropriate.

***Option A (selected by 49% of all respondents) – At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations***

*Reasons for selecting option A*

5.45 Option A was the most popular option and this was echoed in the qualitative research. The main reasons provided for this were that:

- taking the literacy and numeracy awards in S3 would give pupils more time to work towards their subject exams in the summer of S4. It was thought that the new General/Advanced General awards should be kept separate to literacy and numeracy as they were seen as more important

*I would say the end of 3rd year and I think that seems to be pretty common from people I talk to, partly to get it out of the way if you like, before they start their other subjects. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- pupils are already overloaded with exams in S4 and it would not fair to add to this assessment burden
- the literacy and numeracy awards would be a good way to mark the end of the broad curriculum in S1-3. This was seen as especially important as a motivational factor for these years. Some respondents felt that extending the broad educational experience for an extra year would result in pupils losing focus (an issue discussed in more detail in section 8.9). Respondents thought that pupils often do not take studying seriously until they have exams to work towards. The literacy and numeracy awards were seen as going some way to providing motivation of this type for pupils in S1-3

*I would say do it [literacy and numeracy awards] at the end of S3 because they have a focus and a point for their third year. If you don't they've drifted, they have no focus. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

- the results from the literacy and numeracy awards could provide an indication of the level a pupil should be working at in S4. This was seen as particularly important in situations where a pupil may be struggling in these areas and the problem could be 'flagged up' and addressed earlier

*...if you do the literacy and numeracy test... and fail it then the teachers are going to recognise that you've got those problems because you failed and then over the next years they can help you pick your subjects and help you build up those skills. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- it would be best for pupils to sit the literacy and numeracy awards at the earliest time offered because, if they do not have literacy and numeracy skills by that point, then it was unlikely that they would improve by S4
- the time between S3 and S4 is a critical one for pupils and they can be become disengaged by the end of S4. More pupils will be engaged with learning and will more likely to attend the exam if they are presented for the literacy and numeracy awards at the end of S3

*...when you work in an area where you have a higher proportion of pupils who are likely to become disaffected and sometimes go off the rails, they tend to do that between S3 and S4. They are the pupils who often miss out on sitting any qualifications in S4 in Maths and English at the moment, but they still tend to be fairly well engaged up to the end of S3. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

### *Opposition to option A*

- 5.46 Teachers, in the qualitative research in particular, felt that there were problems with option A. The main reason was that some felt that pupils in S3 would not take literacy and numeracy awards seriously. It was felt that if literacy and numeracy awards were to be separated from the 'proper' exams, pupils would not think of them as important.
- 5.47 A common point raised in the consultation was that there is a contradiction between sitting the literacy and numeracy awards in S3 and the general policy against early presentation for other awards.

### ***Option B (selected by 3% of all respondents) - In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations***

#### *Reason for selecting option B*

- 5.48 Option B was selected by a very small minority. Those that did select option B felt that taking the awards at the end of the winter term would reduce the pressure that pupils are under at the end of S4.
- 5.49 Another argument in support of option B was that pupils may not have reached their full potential at the end of S3. Once pupils have embarked on their subject qualifications, their literacy and numeracy skill may develop further, making the winter of S4 a more appropriate time to take these awards.

### *Opposition to option B*

- 5.50 Option B was favoured by very few respondents and one of the strongest objections expressed was that they were opposed to a winter diet of exams in general (an issue discussed in more detail in the section on Q12). The timetabling problems that would result from winter exams were commonly raised.

### ***Option C (selected by 20% of all respondents) - At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations.***

#### *Reasons for selecting option C*

- 5.51 Although option C was not the most popular there was some support for this choice. The main reasons cited were that:
- in practical terms, this option would cause the least disruption to schools. Some respondents felt that it would be sensible to slot the new literacy and numeracy awards into the existing exam arrangements

*It would be important to only have one main diet of examinations, as too many exams would eat in to teaching time and not allow the ideals*

*of Curriculum for Excellence to operate properly. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- option C would give pupils the time to develop literacy and numeracy skills to as high a level as possible. Teachers in the qualitative research, in particular, felt this was important. Some teachers indicated that pupils often do not take studying seriously until they reach S4. Once pupils start to work on what they consider to be their 'important' exams, their performance often improves dramatically

*I think I would lean more towards the summer at the end of 4th year, because you've got all your exams, so you would be like ready, whereas in 3rd year you don't think of exams, I know I didn't, it was just like it didn't matter. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- taking exams requires a certain amount of maturity and a few respondents felt that pupils in S3 would not have this.

5.52 A number of the pupils in the qualitative research felt that sitting the literacy and numeracy awards at the end of S4 would not increase the pressure they were under at this time. There was a feeling that sitting all their qualifications at once would be preferable to having exams, and consequently the stress of exams, more often.

#### *Opposition to option C*

5.53 There was some opposition to option C. In the qualitative research, although some pupils thought that adding two more exams to the summer diet would not be a burden, others felt that this would make the exam diet an even more stressful time. The main issue raised from the consultation was that S4 would be far too late to test these skills, especially in terms of addressing any problems with literacy and numeracy that they may highlight.

#### **Alternatives and other comments**

5.54 Option A was the preferred of the three, given the choices available. However, a number of respondents made it clear that they would, in fact, prefer an alternative. In addition, some respondents thought that none of the above options would be a suitable time to take literacy and numeracy awards. The main alternatives cited were that:

- pupils should be allowed more time to develop the skills they need to achieve the literacy and numeracy awards. The view was that the timing of awards should be flexible for all pupils. This was seen as important for upholding the principles of personalisation and flexibility of *Curriculum for Excellence*

*A significant number of teachers have questioned the validity of waiting until a particular date when pupils may well already be operating at an appropriate level in the early secondary or even in primary. There is some articulation of a continuous process where*



*pupils are tested at appropriate stages as and when they are ready.  
(Secondary school department, consultation response)*

*It will be important in this case that targets for schools take into account the new philosophy of “the right time for the learner on his/her learning journey”, rather than having all learners “through the qualification by a certain stage”. (Scotland’s Colleges, consultation response)*

- literacy and numeracy skills should not be assessed by an external exam at all. These respondents felt that continuous internal assessment of literacy and numeracy would be a better way to measure attainment

*Should be possible to achieve the award at any point based on internally assessed work. Evidence of competence could be accumulated from a variety of sources, including course work from a range of subjects. (Secondary School Department, consultation response)*

- the literacy and numeracy awards should be taken earlier than S3. A number of respondents were concerned that if assessment of the awards did not take place until S3, there would be no assessment of literacy and numeracy skills (and identification of any problems) before this point. If a pupil struggles with these vital skills or has any gaps in their knowledge, respondents felt that these issues would need to be identified earlier. This would allow enough time to address these issues before pupils embarked on their subject qualifications. In addition, if these skills are focused on from 3-18, as suggested by *Curriculum for Excellence*, then respondents saw no benefit in waiting until S3 to formally assess them

*If there is to be a formal assessment of literacy and numeracy, it is difficult to understand why this should be held back until the end of S3, particularly if we are already seeing significant numbers of pupils having difficulty accessing the secondary curriculum in S1. The principle of early intervention suggests that the focus on literacy and numeracy should be much earlier than S3, perhaps even as early as P7. (Teacher, consultation response)*

- pupils should all take the awards at a set point in time but the possibility of upgrading the qualification at a later date should be available, if they subsequently develop their skills.

## **6 PROPOSAL 4 – INCREASED FLEXIBILITY TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Summary of background information in the consultation paper**

6.1 There have been some long-standing concerns about the uneven nature of pace, challenge and achievement in secondary school education. One of the main aims of *Curriculum for Excellence* is to provide a better planned, better connected and more progressive educational experience for children and young people. This requires teaching and learning to strike a better balance between developing the skills for passing examinations and skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. The consultation therefore sought views on the following proposals for encouraging greater flexibility to better meet the needs of young people.

#### ***Encouraging greater flexibility to study National Qualifications over 18 months or 2 years as well as one year***

6.2 This would:

- reduce the current pressures on some young people from the 'two term dash' to Higher;
- increase opportunities to raise attainment by allowing greater time and a more even pace of study for National Qualifications;
- enable those staying on beyond S4 to attain more Higher level qualifications or to gather more qualifications at SCQF levels 4 or 5; and
- free up time for schools to provide a better balance between preparing for exams and developing other skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life.

6.3 The ultimate decision on whether this option is taken up will lie with individual schools and local authorities. However, the Scottish Government would work with these and other key stakeholder groups including higher education institutions and employers to encourage debate on this issue, particularly as it relates to Higher and Advanced Higher.

#### ***Introducing a winter diet of examinations***

6.4 The main benefits of this would be:

- to provide greater flexibility for young people to study qualifications over different periods of time. This includes creating new opportunities for 18 month National Qualifications; and
- to be used at the end of school education for 'Christmas leavers' in S5 to take qualifications including the literacy and numeracy awards.

6.5 The Scottish Government is aware that there was a previous attempt to introduce a winter diet of examinations, although it only ran for one year. However, *Curriculum for Excellence* is creating a new context for Scottish

education. The Scottish Government therefore believes that the time is right to reconsider the idea, particularly in view of the benefits it could bring.

***Encouraging the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and to study for Highers from S4 onwards***

6.6 The main benefits of this would be that it:

- increases the amount of time available for developing other skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life;
- reduces the amount of time spent on external examinations; and
- provides greater opportunities for the most able young people to take more Higher and Advanced Higher courses than at present over the whole senior phase of education from S4-S6.

6.7 As with the proposal to extend the period for studying Highers and Advanced Highers, the ultimate decision on whether to bypass qualifications at lower levels from S4 onwards will lie with schools and local authorities. The Scottish Government is aware that this will require a significant cultural shift amongst the education and wider community. Some parents may also need to be persuaded of the benefits of this approach (although others have said that there is too much emphasis on passing external examinations). There is also a view that attaining lower level qualifications before Highers enables schools, young people and parents to take stock of progress and make the right choices in future learning. Young people, teachers and parents value qualifications as providing 'exam practice', particularly for progression onto Highers. These views need to be balanced against the benefits described above.

**Q11. Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?**

6.8 Almost all respondents (1729 of 1807) answered this question. 43% of all respondents agreed with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years and 36% disagreed. A further 16% agreed to the proposal to allow study over 12 months and 2 years but not over 18 months.

6.9 The majority of respondents from colleges, universities and employers/business representatives agreed. Parents, local authorities and respondents from secondary schools were more divided.

6.10 Pupils in the qualitative research were typically in favour of the proposal.

6.11 Although most felt that the proposal was a good idea in principle, opponents believed the practical problems outweighed the benefits.

## **Reasons for agreement with the proposal**

6.12 The main reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were that:

- allowing a greater amount of time to study qualifications means that pupils gain a greater depth of learning. Respondents felt that this would help prevent pupils from simply learning to pass exams at the expense of learning for learning's sake

*I mean, after all, what is education all about? I think that's what we ask ourselves time and time again. Is it about depth and breadth as well? Should it be about, Higher English for example, should it be about getting a love of literature and studying books and talking. I think it should, but during the Higher course you don't really get a lot of time for that. (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- pupils will be given more opportunity to pass a qualification at a higher level or achieve a better grade than they might have in a 12 month course. This point was often made in reference to the current 'two term dash' to Higher

*This would provide greater flexibility required to meet the differing needs of pupils taking into account different paces of learning. It could also provide space for deeper learning and links with external agencies. (Western Isles Education Department, consultation response)*

- increasing flexibility is a good thing. Respondents felt that this proposal caters for the different learning styles and individual needs of pupils. This would create a greater degree of personalisation in education, an important aspect of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- some respondents, pupils and parents in particular, felt that pupils would benefit from being able to sit the exam when they are ready. There was a misconception that pupils would be in one course and then choose to sit the exam after 12 months, 18 months or 2 years rather than being placed on a particular timescale when the course commenced.

## **Caveats for agreement with the proposal**

6.13 The most common reservations cited by respondents were the practical implications. These were also the main reasons for disagreement and are discussed in more detail in that section.

6.14 A proportion of pupils, parents and teachers felt that that there would be serious implications for future job prospects and for entry to university. However, this was typically not an issue for employers who were more interested in what qualifications a pupil has achieved rather than the length of time taken.

*At the end of the day a qualification is a qualification, they've proved they can do it, the fact that they've taken slightly longer is to me, neither here nor there as a recruiter, it's a case that they've achieved that particular level of competence. (Employer, qualitative research)*

*It should be like your driving test, you passed your driving test, but you take longer than others. If it takes somebody a bit longer to pass a Higher than others it shouldn't be devalued. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

- 6.15 Although most respondents from universities agreed that flexibility was indeed desirable, they did indicate that this proposal may affect course entry requirements and that pupils taking qualifications over longer periods may be disadvantaged. They felt that they would need to know the details of how long a pupil took to complete a qualification in order to be able to discriminate between applicants.

*Universities Scotland welcomes the adoption of a flexible approach to learning that recognizes the intellectual abilities of young people develop at different rates, and is supportive of the general aspirations embodied in the proposal. However, we have serious reservations that this may impact on the competitiveness of their portfolio of qualifications when presented for entry to Higher Education Institutions...It is likely that the implementation of the proposed extended study periods will result in the period of study becoming part of the selection criteria for the purposes of entry to Higher Education. (Universities Scotland, consultation response)*

- 6.16 Another concern that was raised by a number of respondents, particularly pupils and teachers in the qualitative research, was that an 18 month course would leave pupils with a gap in their timetable in the spring term.

*It is a timetable thing as well, after they've done their winter exams what are they going to do for the next six months? (Teacher, qualitative research)*

- 6.17 Some respondents felt that taking longer courses over longer periods of time might ultimately limit the number of courses a pupil could take. They were concerned that pupils might miss the opportunity to study Advanced Highers as they had taken longer to complete earlier qualifications.

- 6.18 Pupils suggested that they might be tempted to take a two year course because it was the 'soft' option - even if they were capable of taking a qualification over a shorter length of time.

### **Reasons for agreement with 12 month and 2 year courses but not 18 month courses**

- 6.19 Around 16% of respondents felt that, although the option to have a 12 month and a 2 year course was good, an 18 month course would not be acceptable.

6.20 The main reasons for this were that:

- presenting pupils for a two year Higher has worked well in the past. This point was made with particular reference to the old two year English Higher
- a number of respondents thought that 18 month courses would necessitate a winter diet of exams and were opposed to winter exams in general (this is discussed in more detail in the section on Q12)
- it was felt that the practical difficulties of accommodating an 18 month course would be much greater than for a 2 year course.

*We welcome the flexibility and the possibilities for personalisation in young people's planning over the senior phase. We see merit in having options available, however our view, at this stage, is that there would be practical difficulties in implementing these proposals, particularly in the short term. The 18 month period is the most controversial and there is a concern that we will have enough difficulty and there will be enough demands on staff in changing the system to meet the broad general principles and purposes of Curriculum for Excellence without adding in the burden that an additional winter diet of examinations would bring. That said, we feel that the possibility should not be ruled out in the longer term, particularly if more creative and innovative approaches to assessment can be developed. (Association of Directors of Education Scotland, consultation response)*

### **Reasons for disagreement with the proposal**

6.21 Although around a third of respondents disagreed with the proposal, only a very small number were against the principle of increased flexibility. The majority of arguments were based on practical issues. The most commonly cited practical problems were that introducing this level of flexibility could result in many possible course variations and greatly complicate timetabling.

*...how do you timetable a class of 18 pupils for Higher History – 6 want to sit this year, 6 after 18 months and 6 after 2 years? In skills-based courses, it might be possible for pupils to sit when ready, but we had difficulty formulating this for content-heavy courses like Chemistry. (School Leaders Scotland, consultation response)*

6.22 It was suggested that the complication in timetabling could be resolved by increasing staffing levels (and therefore funding) but it was felt that this was unlikely to happen. Consequently, respondents thought that multi-level teaching would result. Teachers felt that problems with timetabling courses would lead to pupils in one classroom working at different speeds as well as different levels which would be extremely challenging, if not impossible, to teach.

6.23 This was thought to be a particular problem for small schools which may not be able to offer the classes separately due to insufficient pupil numbers for each option.

- 6.24 A number of respondents believed that if schools offer different levels of flexibility, there would be inconsistencies across Scotland. Pupils in small schools, in particular, could be disadvantaged as they would not have access to the same level of flexibility as their counterparts in larger schools.
- 6.25 Some respondents felt that the delivery of a 1 year course over 2 years would cause difficulties. It was felt that pacing the material over the time period would have to be carefully managed as the less pressured pace might demotivate some pupils, especially if they see others completing the same course in 12 months.
- 6.26 As discussed previously, parents, pupils and teachers were also concerned that employers and Higher Education institutions would not value awards taken over 18 months and 2 years as highly as those taken over 12 months.

**Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations?**

- 6.27 The vast majority (1715 out of 1807) of respondents answered this question. Overall, the majority of all respondents were in opposition: 24% agreed and 69% disagreed.
- 6.28 The majority of parents, employers and respondents from secondary schools were opposed to a winter diet of exams. This was not the case for colleges, universities and employers/business representatives. A larger proportion of respondents agreed than disagreed in each of these subgroups.
- 6.29 Pupils who took part in the qualitative research commonly disagreed with the introduction of a winter diet of exams.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

6.30 The main reasons cited for agreeing with the proposal were that:

- it provides Christmas leavers with an opportunity to gain qualifications before they leave school

*...give Christmas Leavers an opportunity to sit exams just before they leave school. They are often the "disappeared" who slope off with no recognition. Often these pupils simply bide their time from August to December with no real purpose. Something should be put in place for them at the appropriate level. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

- spreading exams out over the year would reduce the pressure of having too many at once. This view was held by pupils and college students, in particular

*I think it's a good idea, breaking up your exams instead of having that pressure all in the one time. (College student, qualitative research)*

- it is necessary to introduce winter exams if there are to be 18 month courses. More flexibility in assessment will give pupils the opportunity to work at their own pace

*If there is going to be flexibility in the period of study times, it seems logical to also allow flexibility in the assessment periods. I do not believe that it helps students who have completed a course to have to then wait six months for assessment. (Individual, consultation response)*

- it gives pupils the opportunity to resit exams they have failed in the summer.

### **Caveats for agreement with the proposal**

6.31 A common caveat cited, mainly from secondary school respondents, was that if winter exams were to be introduced, they should only be available for pupils to resit exams and not for initial presentation.

*...for resit purposes only, to allow pupils to resit courses and move on to something more appropriate or access further education and training. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

6.32 The majority of the concerns raised by those who were, nonetheless, in agreement, were logistical issues. These are reflected in the arguments raised in opposition to the proposal below.

### **Reasons for disagreement with the proposal**

6.33 The majority of respondents were not in favour of introducing a winter diet of exams. Overwhelmingly, they felt that it would be impossible to reconcile the 'logistical nightmare' with any benefits gained. Respondents highlighted many practical problems, all of which were thought to disrupt the school year and lead to an increase in costs.

6.34 It was suggested, mainly by teachers, that providing the space for exams is very difficult. They believed it 'ties up' the assembly hall/sport halls or equivalent large area for a substantial period of time and affects all pupils, not just those sitting exams. This is aggravated by the fact that these types of areas are already in use for dances and concerts during the Christmas period, and sports halls are needed more during the winter in general.

*...in a school, you have to have a very big area, you have to have a quiet area and you have to have an area where potentially 200, 300, 400 pupils can sit a very, very, important exam. You also have five, six, seven, eight hundred other pupils who still need to have their education to be taken seriously as well, so where would you hold it? (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

6.35 It was felt that to fit two exam diets (and the associated prelims, marking for teachers and study leave for pupils) into the school year would seriously impact on teaching time.



*I would be concerned if there were two diets of examinations in the year and different young people sitting exams at different times. I think it would cause quite a lot of disruption to the normal course of a school year and that would have to be planned very carefully. Factor into that that we also have to have prelims, because prelims are important for appeals, then you could potentially have in the course of a 12 month period, given that you have the holidays there, not very much time for teaching, but quite a lot of time given over to exam diets (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

6.36 It was also suggested that the SQA might struggle with the resource implications of a second diet of exams.

6.37 Respondents (especially pupils and teachers) felt that if a winter diet of exam were added to the school year pupils would feel like they had exams all the time, especially if there were to be two sets of prelims as well.

*... you feel like you're continually studying, you're just studying the whole time. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

6.38 It was felt by a number of respondents that holding exams in winter would have specific seasonal problems. Schools are busy with events and activities such as concerts and dances at this time. This means that pupils will be distracted from exams and will not fully focus on studying. It was also pointed out that the extra curricular activities that pupils participate in around Christmas are important in the development of the 4 capacities of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

6.39 Finally, some respondents commented that a winter diet was tried before and was not successful.

#### ***Caveats for disagreement with the proposal***

6.40 Of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal, a few did feel that a winter diet of exams may be possible if the assessment were delivered using a different method. The possibility of using e-assessment methods was suggested as a way of easing some of the logistical problems.

**Q13. If you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations, what subjects and levels of qualification might first be offered?**

6.41 Around a fifth of respondents (391 out of 1807) answered this question. Of the 448 respondents who were in favour of introducing a winter diet of examinations, 87% answered this question.

6.42 This question was not explored in the qualitative research.

6.43 Many respondents did not provide reasons for their responses.

6.44 Around a quarter of respondents suggested that every subject at every level should be offered. Concerns that emerged were related to this being the fairest and most flexible option for pupils.

*Why only some subjects and levels of qualifications? If educationally good for one, then surely educationally good for all. (Secondary school, consultation response)*

*If a winter diet did go ahead, it would be vital to offer the full range of subjects at every examination diet, otherwise pupils studying "minority" subjects would be disadvantaged. (Sector Skills Council: Skills for Logistics, consultation response)*

6.45 Those who did feel that particular subjects should be offered first felt that it should be high uptake or 'core' subjects such as Maths, English, Numeracy and Literacy. One of the reasons given was that using subjects where there was likely to be sufficient demand for a winter diet would provide the most worthwhile trial.

*If adequate resources, including time, are made available, then those subjects with highest uptake should be chosen. If these can be successfully introduced through a winter diet then credibility will be achieved and confidence will grow. (College, consultation response)*

*If it is to be introduced, begin with the subjects with the greatest number of candidates to test the water. (School Leaders Scotland, consultation response)*

6.46 Less commonly, it was suggested that subjects with a more practical or vocational element should first be offered.

6.47 In terms of the levels offered, there were two main viewpoints. The most common suggestion was that Highers (and to a lesser degree Advanced Highers) should be offered first. However, very few respondents provided reasons for their response. Less commonly it was felt that it should first be offered at SCQF level 4 and 5. This was linked to a view that a winter diet would be most beneficial for Christmas leavers.

*The General and Advanced General level of exams should be offered first at winter as these are the levels that most Christmas leavers would be taking. This could be a big improvement for such students and would give them something to aim for instead of them often being a disruptive influence in classes. At present they know full well that they are not going to be in school for the final exams in summer, and so have little incentive to work hard. (Secondary school, consultation response)*

6.48 An alternative stance was that the winter diet should be used for resits only.

*The disruption to schools and indeed the students own continuity of study would be considerable - with one exception - the introduction of a winter diet of exams for leavers who did not succeed at Intermediate 2/Higher/Advanced Higher during the previous summer diet. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

**Q14. Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?**

6.49 Almost all (1716 out of 1807) respondents answered this question. Overall, a small majority were in favour: 52% agreed while 43% disagreed. Half of those who agreed did so with caveats.

6.50 A higher proportion of local authorities agreed.

6.51 While the young people's representatives who responded to the consultation question tended to be in favour, pupils who took part in the qualitative research were generally against the proposal.

***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

6.52 The main reasons given for agreeing with the proposal were that:

- it would challenge and motivate the most able pupils

*High achieving and bright pupils can often get bored and switched off to education, consequently not achieving their best. Allowing pupils to progress as appropriate would allow them to be challenged at their level. (Individual, consultation response)*

- the increased time for teaching and learning (rather than assessment) would deepen pupils' learning and increase achievement

*It is essential to enable children and young people to focus on learning rather than assessment and qualifications (Aberdeenshire Council, consultation response)*

*This move would increase attainment [...] more intensive, in-depth teaching could be started earlier (Individual, consultation response 406)*

- it was achievable for the most able pupils
- it was working well in some schools already.

6.53 It was evident from the qualitative research with parents and teachers that even those who disagreed with the proposal tended to appreciate these benefits.

6.54 In the qualitative research, some parents of very able children felt they would be happy for their child to bypass lower qualifications *if* the relevant teacher(s) were confident that they were capable.

### ***Caveats and concerns from those in agreement***

6.55 The main caveats from those who, overall, supported the proposal were:

- that there needed to be careful selection of the pupils allowed to bypass the lower qualifications – it should be decided on a case by case basis
- that there needed to be adequate compensatory arrangements in place as a safety net.

6.56 Parents raised a concern that the pupils themselves should be confident about bypassing the lower qualifications and should not be forced to do so if they were not comfortable about it. This was also a concern raised by a few respondents from secondary schools who felt there needed to be safeguards against pupils being pushed to bypass qualifications by parents or teachers.

6.57 Other concerns mirrored the reasons given below by those who opposed the proposal.

### ***Reasons for disagreement with the proposal***

6.58 One of the main reasons for opposing the proposal was the view that pupils benefit from the exam practice gained by taking qualifications at lower levels. The lack of exam practice was a particular concern for respondents from secondary schools, parents and pupils (including the most able). They felt that exam practice developed exam technique, built confidence and motivated pupils to work.

*Even the best students need practise in sitting exams to be more comfortable in the exam environment, to develop the practical skills of revising for exams and techniques to do their best IN the exam (e.g. doing the easiest questions first, time keeping etc).(Secondary teacher, consultation response)*

*If you don't have the technique you could get a worse mark - you mess up and stuff and don't read it quite properly. (Pupil aspiring to higher education, qualitative research))*

*Lower level exams gave you a chance to see what the exams were like. You get all of them at the one time so then you weren't as nervous or scared or anything like that. (Pupil aspiring to higher education, qualitative research)*

*I don't really learn if I don't have an exam because, I'm like, there's not much point. (Pupil aspiring to higher education, qualitative research)*

6.59 Prelims and internal assessments were not seen as a sufficient substitute for external exam practice because there was not the same pressure.

6.60 Another major concern, which emerged in the qualitative research with parents and pupils in particular, was the lack of a safety net if things 'go wrong' later on. The possibility of pupils 'going off the rails' and dropping out of school, or unexpected illness or difficulties in their personal lives, were frequently mentioned.

*I have had enough experience of students who are met with personal, health and family difficulties at the same time as they are meant to be studying for exams. Missing out the lower levels may then mean that they have no relevant qualifications. (Individual, consultation response)*

6.61 Although the proposals for compensatory arrangements might help to some extent, they were seen as insufficient because they would probably not cover situations where pupils left school altogether or did not sit the final exam at all.

6.62 For these reasons, some teachers felt that the option to bypass lower qualifications would not be taken up:

*The history of the last 50 years has shown us, that every time we give that opportunity it's not taken, because parents want the best for their children and want that safety net [...] other things could come in, things in your personal life or your own life suddenly affect you and you're simply not able to carry on at school or whatever and I think that is always the fear that parents will have and pupils will have. (Teacher, event)*

6.63 The other main reasons cited by those opposed were that pupils needed the knowledge base gained from the lower qualifications before they could handle the Higher and that they would lack the maturity for Highers.

*If you fast track in Maths, it has been shown that it is not as successful as somebody taking the two years on current Standard Grades, because, yes, you can get them to jump through the hoops, but they don't understand it, they haven't got the maturity or the depth of experience, so when they come to the Higher, yes they've got the bits, but they're not quite sure what to do with it. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

*I worry about whether the students have the maturity required to study at Higher, which is a big step up in maturity terms from the Standard*

*Grade, especially in English texts which deal with very complex emotional issues in some cases. (Teacher, consultation response)*

6.64 When it was suggested in the qualitative research that the content of the lower qualifications could be covered – there was just no need to spend time preparing for and sitting the exam – a common response was that pupils may as well sit the exam then, and have it ‘in the bag’. It was felt that the most able pupils would be untroubled by the exams at the lower level anyway.

6.65 Other reasons given for opposing the proposal (mainly from secondary school respondents) were:

- the difficulty of identifying pupils who might be suitable to bypass lower qualifications without having the results from external assessment at lower levels (these respondents felt internal assessments were insufficient)
- resourcing and logistical problems (e.g. with multi-level classes). Small schools/departments may not be able to provide this option and this was seen by some as elitist because the option would probably not be offered in schools with relatively few very able pupils
- increased pressure on both pupils and teachers
- pupils having to choose their Highers earlier without the benefit of knowing what their best subjects were from lower level exams
- it has been tried before and not worked
- it goes against the principle of inclusiveness and creates a two-tier system. (This point was made by pupils and parents as well as teachers).

**Q15. Do you have any other ideas for increasing flexibility within the senior phase (S4 to S6)?**

6.66 Nearly half of respondents (819 out of 1807) made suggestions for increasing flexibility in the senior phase. Most respondents from colleges and local authorities made suggestions. Fewer employers/business representatives and parents who responded to the consultation did so<sup>15</sup>.

6.67 Suggestions for increasing flexibility in the senior phase fell into five broad categories:

- increasing the number of vocational courses and opportunities
- better resourcing
- the nature and structure of qualifications offered
- timetabling and timing
- modes of delivery and assessment.

6.68 Each of these areas is discussed below.

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<sup>15</sup> This issue was not explored in the qualitative research with parents, pupils or employers.

### ***Increasing the number of vocational courses and opportunities***

6.69 By far the most common suggestion for increasing flexibility, proposed by over a third of the respondents who made suggestions, related to increasing the number of vocational opportunities. This included vocational courses within school and placements with employers. There were calls for better links with colleges and industry in order to facilitate this.

*I would like to see more meaningful links with the real world and for instance, in my subject, I would love to see, rather than getting them to do the Higher in 4th year, if they're really that great have them go out on an industrial placement. I would rather see that time used to make the connection between life outside of school and the school itself.  
(Teacher, qualitative research)*

6.70 Many respondents felt this was particularly important for the less academic pupils. For example, one teacher in the qualitative research commented:

*I think a greater emphasis on vocational courses will really help, I think that two years ago when I had [name of class] and it was guys who, if they work at all when they leave school, I hate to say it, but they will be like driving a bus or working in a check-out or something and yet I was teaching them to do critical essays and I just thought 'this is just silly'. I kind of think having vocational courses will make a huge difference.  
(Teacher, qualitative research)*

6.71 However, others made the point that vocational courses were of relevance to all pupils.

6.72 In addition to more vocational opportunities, it was suggested that life skills courses in general should encouraged.

6.73 Related to these calls for more vocational and life skills courses was a suggestion that the status of these types of achievements and experiences should be improved. One specific concern was related to non school based learning:

*Formal inclusion of achievement and attainment by young people in settings outwith school at all stages of their learning must be included if Curriculum for Excellence aspirations are to be achieved. There is a real risk that learning providers other than schools will be looked upon as second class or worthless if the achievements gained are not formally recorded in young people's Scottish Qualifications Certificate/Summary of Attainment. (Youth Scotland, consultation response)*

## **Better resourcing**

6.74 The second most common issue raised was the need for more resources (including funding and staff) in order to increase flexibility.

*There are huge resource implications, which cannot be ignored: flexibility by definition is less efficient. We would like to see the development of Skills for Work and other vocational type courses but again there are massive resource implications. (Secondary school, consultation response)*

*In all of the proposals on increased flexibility it is absolutely vital that resources are available within schools to allow the flexibility to take place. (Scottish Trades Union Congress, consultation response)*

6.75 A teacher in the qualitative research suggested that increased resources for smaller schools would enable them to match the flexibility in course choice offered in larger schools:

*If it has been proven in the past that there has been less flexibility with regard to the curriculum choice with number of courses available and so on in small schools compared to larger schools [...] why not have increased revenues coming into smaller schools relative to larger schools, so that we do have a higher staffing ratio, that we are allowed to do things, that because of numbers it is possible for large schools to do. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

6.76 Another suggestion was to encourage collaboration among neighbouring schools in order to increase course choice.

6.77 A few respondents proposed smaller classes as a way to increase flexibility - presumably on the basis that this would enable a wider range of courses and different classes studying qualifications over different time periods.

## **The nature and structure of qualifications**

6.78 Another relatively common suggestion, mentioned by 9% of those making suggestions, related to increasing the flexibility of units by having stand alone units and 'group awards' such as Baccalaureates.

*[Below Higher] it might be worth exploring more creative options, for example, borrowing more from the college system where course units can gain accreditation and build towards an award. This would be more in keeping with the principles of flexibility and personalisation envisaged by Curriculum for Excellence. (The Educational Institute of Scotland, consultation response)*

*Shared units common to different courses and qualifications would help to reinforce the principles of a Curriculum for Excellence. (Secondary school, consultation response)*



6.79 Other suggestions relating to the structure of qualifications were:

- short courses and modules
- better articulation/progression between levels
- more scope for lateral progression (particularly for less able pupils).

6.80 A few respondents suggested widening the range of qualifications to include, for example, A levels, GCSEs and National Certificates.

*...the full range of Scottish qualifications [...] could be used to accredit their learning and formally recognise wider achievement. These other qualifications (National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Higher National Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications and the qualifications increasingly used in Scotland from other awarding bodies) provide methodologies, design principles and practical differences that can both inform and reduce unnecessary duplication in the development of the new qualifications. (Scotland's Colleges, consultation response)*

### **Timetabling and timing**

6.81 Several suggestions related to the timetabling of courses and assessments. These included:

- a common S4-S6 timetable
- abolishing the column system for choice of course
- studying qualifications over different timescales
- more guidance for timetablers
- allowing pupils to choose a wider range of subjects
- improving specialisation by allowing earlier choice of course
- a diet of resits
- assessment on demand rather than a fixed diet of examinations.

6.82 A few consultation respondents made suggestions relating to flexibility around age:

- progression should be based on ability not age
- early presentation should be allowed
- the Christmas leaver requirements should be abolished and pupils should be able to leave after S4, or when they are ready, regardless of age.

*... pupils should be able to leave school when they are ready to follow what they would like to do (Shetland Islands Council, consultation response)*

### **Modes of delivery and assessment**

6.83 A few respondents suggested flexibility around different modes of delivery such as distance learning and e-learning.

6.84 Similarly, there were suggestions relating to reducing the amount of assessment and different approaches to assessment (including open-book exams, dissertations, team projects and e-assessment). One local authority suggested that use of the City and Guilds model of online examinations would allow for presentations and resits at any time, and remove the need for specific diets.

## 7 TIMELINE

**Q16. It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/09, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from school year 2009/10. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/13 onwards to ensure smooth progression between the curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment on any implications to be considered.**

*It should be noted that, following Curriculum for Excellence Management Board advice, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on 31 October 2008 announced an additional year for implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, with the effect that new and revised qualifications are now to be introduced from 2013/14 onwards. This section discusses views on the indicative timeline contained in the consultation paper (i.e. new and revised qualifications introduced from 2012/13).*

- 7.1 Almost all respondents (1696 out of 1807) answered this question and 266 commented on the implications. Lower proportions of parents, respondents from universities and employers/business representatives responded.
- 7.2 The issue was not explored in the qualitative research with pupils, parents or employers.
- 7.3 Most respondents (78%) did not think that the indicative timeline was realistic and just 15% of all respondents thought that it was. However, almost three-quarters of respondents from colleges indicated that it was realistic.

### ***Reasons for agreement with the proposal***

- 7.4 Among the minority who were in favour, the most common reason given was simply that the changes should happen soon.

*Time is not on the side of innovation if we are to set a global standard so as little delay as possible. (Individual, consultation response)*

- 7.5 A couple of consultation respondents also commented that ‘work expands to fill the time available’ and that a delay would simply result in a ‘the same rush just one year or so further down the line instead of now’.

### ***Caveats and concerns from those in agreement***

- 7.6 Almost half of those who were supportive of the proposed timeline had caveats. These mainly related to the resources required including:

- funding
- centrally provided resources including guidelines and course documentation
- CPD provision (and the time set aside to take advantage of it)
- consideration of teachers’ workload.

*I think it's totally realistic, it's achievable, given the appropriate resources, appropriate time, but before you can answer that question what kind of resources will we get to support it?(Teacher, qualitative research)*

7.7 Other caveats were:

- the need for teachers to be 'on board' with the changes
- the need for parents, employers, colleges and universities to be informed and involved.

### ***Reasons for disagreement with the proposal***

7.8 The main reason for disagreement with the proposed timeline was that it was insufficient time for the necessary work to be carried out properly. This included planning, training of teachers, and the development of course materials, assessments and support materials.

*The proposed timescale [...] is unachievable. Not only are the proposals themselves complex, they also require considerable school organisation and considerable teacher CPD. (Educational Institute of Scotland)*

7.9 Other common reasons given for disagreement were that:

- there is insufficient information about the changes and the proposals/*Curriculum for Excellence* are too vague

*There are too many unknowns in this system to allow a secondary school to plan the supposed 3 to 18 curriculum, which we are supposed to plan... (Headteacher, qualitative research)*

- there is a need for more consultation

*Gut feeling is you're a year too quick. For information and consultation use another year. (Teacher, qualitative research)*

- changes should be piloted and/or phased in (several respondents suggested that lessons should be learned from the '*Higher Still experience*').

7.10 It should be noted that a tiny proportion (less than 1%) of those who disagreed did so because they thought the changes should be implemented sooner.

### ***Implications***

7.11 Comments on the implications of the proposed timeline echoed the caveats and the points made in opposition, namely the need for:

- considerable preparation time to ensure changes are not rushed
- CPD for teachers

- teaching resources and support materials
- the involvement of all stakeholders
- teachers to be 'on board'.

## 8 OTHER COMMENTS

- 8.1 Overall, around half of respondents (893 of 1807) responded in the ‘any other comments’ section of the consultation document. These comments did not always arise from consultation proposals but were often related to the implementation of a broad general education from pre-school to the end of S3 (and the particular implications of this for S1-S3) as proposed in *Building the Curriculum 3* and to the consultation process itself, discussed below. Other points raised here have been covered in relation to specific questions (e.g., that current courses should be revised as opposed to new courses being introduced, that resources for staffing levels, staff training and the development materials is a serious issue and that the aim of *Curriculum for Excellence* to reduce the assessment burden would not be achieved by the proposals and, in fact, the assessment burden might be increased).
- 8.2 A large number of the comments made illustrated interpretations of the guidance provided in *Building The Curriculum 3* which are subject to current on-going work e.g. on assessment 3-18, recognising achievement and models to deliver a broad general education.

### **Broad general education and issues associated with early presentation**

- 8.3 *Building the Curriculum 3 – a Framework for Learning and Teaching* proposes an entitlement for all children and young people to experience a broad general education from pre-school to the end of S3. This broad general education will include learning and teaching associated with all of the experiences and outcomes across all the curriculum areas up to and including the third curriculum level. This is re-stated in the consultation document which states that young people can expect their education to provide them with “a broad general education, including well planned experiences and outcomes across the curriculum from early years through to S3”. This is not intended as a “common course”, but as an opportunity to develop both breadth and depth of learning in a way that best meets the needs of individual young people. *Building the Curriculum 3* further proposes that “most learners will progress into the fourth (curriculum) level in many aspects of their learning before the end of S3”. The fourth curriculum level equates to SCQF level 4. The guidance further proposes that all young people are entitled to experience a senior phase to obtain qualifications as well as to develop further skills and the four capacities.
- 8.4 Full details can be found in *Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching*<sup>16</sup>.
- 8.5 Within both *Building the Curriculum 3* and the consultation the Scottish Government reaffirmed its commitment to the principles set out in the national guidance on early presentation for examinations i.e. that “decisions about early presentation must be made in the best interests of the individual pupil – not classes, cohorts or year groups”. In line with this, the Scottish Government

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/226155/0061245.pdf>

does not support early presentation other than in exceptional circumstances related to individuals.

- 8.6 Around one in six of those who made additional comments raised issues relating to the implementation of a broad general education in S1-S3 or the restrictions on early presentation.
- 8.7 These issues also came up in the qualitative discussions.
- 8.8 It should be noted that these issues were not specific consultation questions and were consequently not posed directly to qualitative participants. The spontaneous reactions to these plans were not systematically explored (in either the consultation or the qualitative research) and that those who did comment tended to do so because of their concerns about the proposals, based on the information they had. Therefore, we are unable to describe the full range of views and can, in no way, quantify the responses as we have done in the rest of the report. Rather, the following points should be taken as an indication of the concerns among some stakeholders.
- 8.9 Those who had concerns about the implementation of a broad general curriculum in S1-S3 tended to raise the following issues:

- there was a view that S1 and S2 (which are built currently around a common course) are already a “waste of time” for many pupils and that the implementation of a broad general curriculum to S3 (although not based upon a common course) could extend this problem further. Pupils were felt to become demotivated under current arrangements and appear ready to specialise in their chosen subjects by the end of S2, or earlier. Thus there were concerns that pupils could become demotivated further under the new arrangements and that discipline could become a bigger problem.

*1st and 2nd year were a waste of time, I look back and think what did I do? So if you just extend that with another year, what a waste. (Pupil, qualitative research)*

- a related view was that making S3 a year in which pupils have a broad general education, as opposed to studying towards qualifications, would mean that pupils would gain less subject specific knowledge.
- the length of time available to study for General or Advanced General qualifications was also raised. There was a view that a year was not enough time in which to complete these courses and that the problem of a ‘one-year dash’ or ‘two-term dash’ to Higher qualifications would simply be extended to the General and Advanced General qualifications.

*S3 is currently a successful stage in Scottish education, ask any pupil, they enjoy S3. They gain focus and take ownership for their learning. After complaining about a one year dash at Higher we now also seem to be proposing a one year dash in S4 too. We like having a two year course in S3/S4. By all means update and alter the courses to include many of the excellent principles of the CfE but let's not throw away the*

*strengths that currently exist. (Secondary school, consultation response)*

- subject specific concerns were also raised. A fear was expressed, for example that the proposals for a broad general education could mean that pupils would be taught General Science for a year longer than at present, potentially by non-subject specialists, for example a Chemistry teacher teaching S3 Biology and Physics.
- the need for some form of assessment in S3 was a further point raised. There was a view that pupils should have something that will challenge them, provide feedback on their progression and ensure that their learning in S1 – S3 is properly recognised.
- it was clear that there was a common misunderstanding of the proposals regarding the number of subjects leading to qualifications that pupils would study during S4: many thought that all pupils would be restricted to studying for 5 qualifications only compared to the 8 that most currently study. Thus, there was a view that the plan for a broad general curriculum in S1-S3 would result in a narrowing of the curriculum in S4.

*...It appears from the proposal that pupils will follow a broad curriculum from S1-S3, but will then have a narrower choice than at present in terms of the first level of qualifications (the proposal appears to suggest that 5 subjects would be taken in S4). This significantly narrows choice for pupils ... (Individual, consultation response)*

- finally, the plans for the broad curriculum were seen to cause specific practical problems for Junior Schools in rural and island communities which provide S1-S4 education only.

8.10 A number of positive comments about the broad curriculum were also made. These included:

- pupils are better placed to make the important decision of subject choice at the end of S3 than the end of S2. As they are more mature, they are less likely to choose subjects that they think will be 'easy', and are possibly more likely to know what they want to do after leaving school.

*...when I made my choices in 3rd year I chose what I thought was going to be easy, as opposed to what was going to be relevant and good for what I maybe wanted to do later on in life. (College Student, qualitative research)*

- it is the best way of ensuring that the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* are implemented.

*extending the opportunity for General Education for the next generation is key in our ability to educate pupils in the spirit and practice of CfE. It allows public perception of "general education" to regain its previous esteem by re-focusing on Education's main aims: to*



*enable/empower/challenge our children to become responsible citizens, effective contributors, successful learners and confident individuals. [...] (Individual, consultation response)*

8.11 Those who commented on the implications of the proposals on early presentation were typically disappointed by the decision of the Scottish Government to support it only in exceptional circumstances in the best interests of individual pupils. The following reasons were given:

- it goes against the principles of personalisation and choice embedded in Curriculum for Excellence.

*If one of the defining principles of A Curriculum for Excellence is personalisation and choice, it seems antithetical to remove the choice of early presentation from individual schools. (School Leaders Scotland)*

- early presentation is felt to increase motivation and attainment, not only in the more able pupils but also in those working at SCQF level 3.

*Having just presented a class of youngsters at foundation level at the end of S3 and seen nearly the whole class achieve a grade 5 or 6, whereas similar classes presented at the end of S4 have not been as successful. (Secondary school teacher, consultation response)*

## **Comments on the consultation process**

8.12 Around one in six of those who made additional comments had concerns about the consultation process itself. A number felt that the consultation was vague and lacking in detail (this was also a point raised in responses to some specific questions). In particular, it was felt that without clear guidelines on the course content for the new qualifications at SCQF 4 and 5 it was difficult to make an informed response to the proposal. This extended to *Curriculum of Excellence* more generally, including the experiences and outcomes for particular subjects, as well as what the broad curriculum in S1-S3 would entail. Respondents indicated that for the consultation to hold greater meaning they would require exemplars of timetabling models, coursework and assessment materials.

8.13 Another issue to emerge was the style of the consultation. Both the consultation and *Building the Curriculum 3* were described as ‘full of jargon’ and ‘edu-speak’ and some of the language was considered to be clichéd. It was suggested that this would make the documents less accessible to those not working in the field of education, specifically parents and employers. Other comments were critical of the fact that a number of decisions that were viewed as important (for example, to replace Standard Grade and Intermediates with a new qualification) had been taken in advance of the consultation exercise.

8.14 The extent of consultation was also questioned. In particular, some secondary school respondents thought that there should have been more active consultation with classroom teachers and that this should have occurred at an

earlier stage in the formation of the proposals.<sup>17</sup> In addition, many felt that the consultation process should continue when more details are made available.

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that SQA, on behalf of the Scottish Government, carried out pre-consultation work (involving over 2000 participants from a range of schools and colleges) but that respondents were not generally aware of this.

## **APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EACH CONSULTATION QUESTION**

**Q1: Do you welcome the intention to update all qualifications at Access, Higher and Advanced Higher in line with *Curriculum for Excellence*?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes, no comments	303	17	198	17	3	3	4	1	1	0	2	74
Yes with reasons	304	17	203	8	7	6	13	7	6	1	3	50
Yes but with caveats	765	42	571	24	22	12	5	23	1	7	5	95
No, no comments	24	1	19	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
No with reasons	317	18	258	7	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	49
No but with caveats	10	1	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Unclear	16	1	13	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
No response to question	38	2	20	7	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	5
No response to question but other comments	30	2	24	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1807</b>		<b>1314</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>282</b>
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>76</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>20</b>										

**Q2: Early consultation has identified the best features of Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications as: a) the inclusive approach to certification contained in Standard Grade b) the unit-based structure of Intermediate qualifications. Are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Response	1031	57	824	23	14	14	7	23	2	5	5	116
Unclear	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No response to question	409	22	251	30	6	4	9	1	3	3	3	98
No response to question but other comments	365	19	237	13	13	7	9	7	4	3	3	68
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282

**Q3: One of the proposals is to grade units. Do you agree that units should be graded A - C rather than pass/fail?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Rep	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq (N)	(%)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes, no comments	163	9	110	10	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	39
Yes with reasons	587	32	426	21	6	8	10	10	6	2	4	94
Yes but with caveats	187	10	142	14	1	5	3	5	1	1	1	14
No, no comments	105	6	85	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	18
No with reasons	644	36	476	13	23	6	7	14	0	6	1	98
No but with caveats	19	1	17	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Unclear	16	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
No response to question	63	3	26	8	1	3	3	0	1	2	4	15
No response to question but other comments	23	1	18	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>51</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>43</b>										

**Q4: Do you want graded units to count towards the final award?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)			
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes, no comments	169	9	105	12	1	3	4	1	2	1	1	39
Yes with reasons	374	21	257	16	2	4	5	6	5	1	5	73
Yes but with caveats	178	10	128	8	3	5	4	5	0	1	0	24
No, no comments	275	15	222	7	7	2	1	5	0	3	0	28
No with reasons	579	32	463	11	8	6	2	11	1	2	0	75
No but with caveats	64	4	43	3	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Unclear	22	1	18	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
No response to question	79	4	38	8	1	3	6	0	1	2	4	16
No response to question but other comments	24	1	19	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1
N/A	43	2	21	0	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	16
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>40</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>51</b>										

**Q5: Which option for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support? (A) Extend the range of grading in course awards to grade E. (B) Recognise unit passes only. (C) Compensatory award at the level of the course studied with no grade awarded. (D) Compensatory grade C award at the level of course below that studied. (E) Compensatory grade A award at the level of course below that studied.**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Option A	118	7	85	7	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	22
Option A with reasons	120	7	78	5	1	3	5	0	1	0	0	27
Option A with caveats	16	1	11	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1
Option B	372	21	287	9	6	6	3	4	2	0	2	53
Option B with reasons	435	24	321	14	17	4	3	9	1	2	3	61
Option B with caveats	38	2	30	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Option C	88	5	54	6	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	24
Option C with reasons	62	3	48	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Option C with caveats	14	1	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Option D	84	5	67	2	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	11
Option D with reasons	51	3	42	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	5
Option D with caveats	38	2	33	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Option E	42	2	32	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7
Option E with reasons	33	2	27	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
Option E with caveats	19	1	13	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
None of the above	87	5	65	1	4	2	0	4	0	2	0	9
None of the above with reasons/comments	11	1	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Unclear	17	1	12	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
No response to question	100	6	47	10	1	6	6	0	1	3	5	21
No response to question but other comments	62	3	43	4	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	8
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall Option A %</b>		<b>15</b>										
<b>Overall Option B %</b>		<b>47</b>										
<b>Overall Option C %</b>		<b>9</b>										
<b>Overall Option D %</b>		<b>10</b>										
<b>Overall Option E %</b>		<b>5</b>										



**Q6: The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not please offer an alternative and explain your choice.**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	Las	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes to both names	371	21	241	24	4	5	11	3	3	1	1	78
Yes to General only	12	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Yes to General only with reasons	71	4	59	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	9
No to both	268	15	209	5	4	2	3	3	2	2	1	37
No to both with reasons	940	52	712	21	24	12	5	24	2	5	4	131
Unclear	11	1	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
No response to question	112	6	61	10	1	5	5	0	1	2	4	23
No response to question but other comments	16	1	13	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Don't mind	6	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>21</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>71</b>										

**Q7: Do you agree with the proposal to offer Literacy and Numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5)? If not please offer an alternative.**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes to both	529	29	393	21	5	5	3	3	1	1	3	94
Yes to both with reasons	190	11	121	5	17	3	6	7	4	0	1	26
Yes to both but with caveats	387	21	281	11	6	6	8	11	3	3	4	54
Yes to both with reasons and caveats	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes to Literacy only with reasons	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes to Numeracy only with reasons	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes to Numeracy only but with caveats	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No to both	67	4	56	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
No to both with reasons	458	25	331	13	4	10	4	6	1	5	0	84
No to both but with caveats	23	1	15	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
Unclear	27	1	24	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
No response to question	53	3	27	9	1	1	3	2	0	1	2	7
No response to question but other comments	66	4	59	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	4
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>61</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>30</b>										

**Q8: National Qualifications at Access 3 (SCQF level 3) do not have an external exam. Do you agree that any new awards in literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 3 should have an external examination?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes to both exams	262	15	195	16	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	47
Yes to both exams with reasons	541	30	413	16	4	3	4	5	5	0	3	88
Yes to both exams but with caveats	68	4	51	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	0	8
Yes to both with reasons and caveats	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
No to both exams	225	12	173	2	4	1	0	2	0	0	1	42
No to both exams with reasons	486	27	340	18	18	11	11	18	3	2	3	62
No to both exams but with caveats	47	3	30	2	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	7
Unclear	28	2	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
No response to question	87	5	45	9	1	4	4	1	0	4	4	15
No response to question but other comments	27	1	24	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Not applicable	32	2	17	1	0	3	2	0	0	2	0	7
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>49</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>42</b>										

**Q9: Should the weighting between the internal and external assessments for the Literacy and Numeracy awards be equal? If not should more weight be attached to the internal or external assessment? Please explain. (A) Equal weight (B) More weight to internal assessment (C) More weight to external assessment**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)			
Response type												
Option A	175	10	120	6	1	1	5	3	2	0	0	37
Option A with reasons	136	7	103	5	1	0	1	7	0	0	2	17
Option A with caveats	22	1	15	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1
Option B	86	5	55	4	5	1	0	0	0	0	2	19
Option B with reasons	101	6	51	6	14	4	2	1	0	0	2	21
Option B with caveats	46	3	25	1	7	3	3	1	1	1	0	4
Option B with reasons and caveats	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Option C	247	14	205	5	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	34
Option C with reasons	538	30	435	10	2	5	2	3	0	1	0	80
Option C with caveats	81	5	68	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	9
Option C with reasons and caveats	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
None of the above	27	1	24	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
None of the above with reasons/comments	19	1	9	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
Unclear	17	1	10	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	1
No response to question	166	9	92	18	1	7	6	5	0	6	4	27
No response to question but other comments	74	4	54	3	1	1	2	3	0	0	0	10
Not applicable	69	4	46	1	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	17
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall Option A %</b>		<b>18</b>										
<b>Overall Option B %</b>		<b>14</b>										
<b>Overall Option C %</b>		<b>49</b>										

**Q10: When should young people be assessed for Literacy and Numeracy awards? (A) At the end of S3 as part of the summer diet of examinations. (B) In the December of S4 as part of a winter diet of examinations. (C) At the end of S4 as part of the summer diet of examinations**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Option A	281	15	217	11	4	1	3	1	0	0	0	44
Option A with reasons	501	28	365	17	2	7	4	12	4	2	5	83
Option A with caveats	112	6	83	7	4	0	1	4	1	1	1	10
Option B	21	1	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Option B with reasons	37	2	25	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	8
Option B with caveats	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Option C	146	8	108	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	33
Option C with reasons	182	10	155	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	23
Option C with caveats	38	2	26	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
None of the above	151	8	104	2	8	4	5	6	1	0	1	20
None of the above with reasons/comments	12	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Unclear	12	1	7	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
No response to question	138	8	78	14	1	5	6	3	0	4	4	23
No response to question but other comments	118	7	81	5	10	2	3	2	0	1	0	14
Not applicable	55	3	39	1	0	2	1	0	0	3	0	9
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall Option A %</b>		<b>49</b>										
<b>Overall Option B %</b>		<b>3</b>										
<b>Overall Option C %</b>		<b>20</b>										

**Q11: Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes to both	176	10	107	11	2	3	3	0	1	0	1	47
Yes to both with reasons	304	17	186	8	17	4	15	8	4	0	5	57
Yes to both but with caveats	284	16	205	11	10	7	2	7	3	2	0	37
Yes to 18 months	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes to 18 months with reasons	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Yes to 18 months but with caveats	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Yes to 2 years	59	3	53	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
Yes to 2 years with reasons	158	9	123	4	1	2	0	4	0	1	1	22
Yes to 2 years but with caveats	71	4	61	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	5
No to 18 months and 2 years	57	3	47	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8
No to 18 months and 2 years with reasons	579	32	463	16	1	4	2	7	1	3	0	83
No to 18 months and 2 years but with caveats	15	1	10	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Unclear	18	1	13	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
No response to question	51	3	22	7	2	3	3	0	0	2	2	10
No response to question but other comments	27	1	20	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>43</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>36</b>										

**Q12: Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes, no comments	169	9	104	12	7	2	7	2	2	0	0	33
Yes with reasons	146	8	88	4	8	3	7	1	2	0	2	31
Yes but with caveats	133	7	75	8	10	5	3	6	2	1	0	23
No, no comments	489	27	416	9	1	1	1	4	2	1	2	52
No with reasons	732	40	554	25	6	6	3	12	1	6	1	118
No but with caveats	29	2	17	2	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	4
No with reasons and caveats	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unclear	15	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
No response to question	77	4	38	5	1	6	4	0	0	2	6	15
No response to question but other comments	15	1	11	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>24</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>69</b>										

**Q13: If you agree with the proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations, what subjects and levels of qualifications might first be offered?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Response	391	22	257	14	15	11	6	9	5	2	3	69
Unclear	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
No response to question	493	27	360	20	7	8	9	2	0	3	6	78
No response to question but other comments	57	3	36	3	3	0	1	3	1	0	0	10
Not applicable	862	48	659	29	8	6	9	17	3	6	2	123
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282



**Q14: Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq	(%)	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
Response type	(N)		(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
Yes, no comments	220	12	149	11	1	3	4	1	3	0	1	47
Yes with reasons	246	14	179	5	1	3	6	8	2	0	1	41
Yes but with caveats	464	26	334	20	17	9	4	15	4	3	4	54
Yes but with reasons and caveats	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
No, no comments	84	5	56	4	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	20
No with reasons	672	37	526	17	9	5	7	3	0	4	1	100
No but with caveats	19	1	12	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Unclear	10	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
No response to question	66	4	34	7	2	2	3	2	0	2	4	10
No response to question but other comments	25	1	18	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>52</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>43</b>										

**Q15: Do you have any other ideas for increasing flexibility within the senior phase (S4 – S6)?**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq		Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq	Freq
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Response	819	45	602	23	25	14	10	28	4	6	5	102
Unclear	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No response to question	871	48	621	37	7	8	15	2	4	4	5	168
No response to question but other comments	113	6	87	6	1	3	0	1	1	1	1	12
<b>Total number of cases</b>	<b>1807</b>		<b>1314</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>282</b>

**Q16: It is intended that planning for the new curriculum should commence in 2008/09, with approaches based on the new curriculum introduced from school year 2009/10. This suggests that the new and revised qualifications and any increased flexibilities would be required from 2012/13 onwards to ensure smooth progression between the curriculum and qualifications. Is this indicative timeline realistic? Please comment on any implications to be considered.**

	Total	Total	Sub-group analysis									
			Sec. schools	Parents	Colleges	Univs	Employers/ Business Reps	LAs	Prim. Schools	Teachers' Assocs	Young People's Reps	Others
	Freq (N)	(%)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)	Freq (N)
<b>Response type</b>												
Yes, no comments	126	7	77	2	6	4	2	0	1	0	0	35
Yes with reasons	21	1	8	2	0	0	0	2	3	0	1	4
Yes but with caveats	130	7	76	4	18	2	4	3	1	1	2	19
No, no comments	122	7	92	4	1	2	1	1	1	0	1	19
No with reasons	1281	71	995	40	7	11	11	25	3	9	2	178
No but with caveats	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unclear	14	1	8	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
No response to question	95	5	46	12	1	5	6	0	0	1	3	21
No response to question but other comments	16	1	10	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	2
Total number of cases	1807		1314	66	33	25	25	31	9	11	11	282
<b>Overall yes %</b>		<b>15</b>										
<b>Overall no %</b>		<b>78</b>										

## **APPENDIX 2: ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS THAT WERE SENT A COPY OF THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

Copies of the consultation document were sent to all schools, colleges, universities and local authorities. The consultation document was also available electronically on the Scottish Government website. In addition, copies were sent to the following stakeholders.

School Leaders Scotland (SLS)  
National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) Scotland  
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)  
Voice – The Union for Education Professionals  
Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS)  
Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)  
Association of Catholic Head Teachers of Secondary Schools in Scotland (CHAS)  
Association of Catholic Head Teachers of Primary Schools in Scotland (CHAPS)  
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) Scotland  
Scottish Parent Council Association  
Scottish Parent Teacher Council  
Student Awards Agency for Scotland  
Pupil Inclusion Network Scotland  
Community Service Volunteers (CSV) Scotland  
Scottish National Council of YMCAs  
Scottish Youth Parliament  
Young Scot  
YouthLink Scotland  
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA)  
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland  
Children in Scotland  
Enquire, Children in Scotland  
Church of Scotland Education Committee  
Scottish Association of Young Farmers Club  
YWCA Scotland  
Guide Association Scotland  
The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scotland  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Scotland  
HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE)  
Youth Scotland  
Fairbridge Scotland  
Venture Scotland  
Facilitating Access Breaking Barriers (Fabb) Scotland  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Youth Scotland  
Ultralab  
Jan Bebbington, Chair of Advisory Group on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development  
Boys Brigade Scotland  
Keep Scotland Beautiful  
Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Association of Scotland's Colleges  
Scottish Further Education Unit  
Scottish Association of Alcohol and Drug Action Teams  
Prince's Trust Scotland  
Ocean Youth Trust Scotland  
UNISON Scotland  
Tapestry Partnership  
Girls Brigade Scotland  
Rowena Arshad, Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland  
Bòrd na Gàidhlig  
The Scottish Council, Scout Association  
Scottish Science Advisory Committee  
Association of Science Education Scotland  
Scotland IS  
Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)  
Scottish Outdoor Education Centres  
National Association for Small Schools  
Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Demos – Independent think tank and research institute  
Institute for Public Policy Research, Education Team  
Association of Science Education  
Home Education Advisory Service  
Bill Maxwell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales  
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland  
Scottish Episcopal Church  
Liam Hannan MSYP & John Loughton MSYP, Scottish Youth Parliament  
Scottish Funding Council for Further & Higher Education  
Communities Scotland  
Capability Scotland  
General Teaching Council for Scotland  
Forestry Commission Scotland  
Scottish Civic Forum  
Fast Forward  
Children's Parliament  
Scottish Schools Equipment Research  
Action of Churches Together in Scotland  
Scottish Churches Education Group  
Scottish Disability Equality Forum  
Woodcraft Folk  
NHS Health Scotland  
Careers Scotland  
Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS)  
Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)  
Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland  
Scottish Enterprise  
Scottish Catholic Education Service  
Scottish Association of Teachers of History  
Fèisean nan Gàidheal  
World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Scotland

Department for Children, Schools and Families  
Save The Children  
Barnardos Scotland  
Universities Scotland  
Scottish Arts Council  
Scottish Council of Independent Schools  
Kathleen Marshall, Scotland's Commissioner for Children  
Children 1<sup>st</sup>  
Alcohol Focus Scotland  
Scottish Drugs Forum  
Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Scotland  
Maggi Allan, Ex Programme Board, A Curriculum for Excellence  
Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and  
Commerce (RSA) Education  
George MacBride (Professional Advisor)  
Scottish Chambers of Commerce  
Scottish Engineering  
Elaine Bell – Chief Executive NHS Scotland  
Centre for Educational Sociology  
Scottish Network for Able Pupils  
Equality Network  
CNSA (Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich)  
Comunn na Gàidhlig  
Schoolhouse Home Education Association

## APPENDIX 3: DISCUSSION GUIDES

### Example Final Topic Guide: Pupils and College Students (1.5 hours)

#### INTRODUCTION

- Thank participants for agreeing to take part
- Introduce self & Ipsos MORI
- We have been asked by the Scottish Government to conduct some research into what people think about plans to change some of the qualifications and exams which are done in secondary school.
- (S5): As you have just finished doing Standard Grades or Intermediates...  
(S4): As you are just about to take your Standard Grades or Intermediates...  
...you will know more than anyone else what it is like to take exams at this level and we are very interested in your opinion of the changes the Scottish Government have planned. We're talking to groups of pupils like yourselves in other parts of Scotland, and we're also talking to parents, teachers, employers and people in colleges.
- Explain Ipsos MORI's independence and guarantee of confidentiality (MRS code of conduct). Tell participants not to talk outside the group about what other participants have said
- Group should last about 1 hours.
- Request permission to record - can be turned off at any point - if necessary, stress this is only to ensure that comments are accurately captured and to allow discussion to flow freely as opposed to note taking.

#### WARM UP

Short warm up/introductory exercise:

- introduce yourself to me.
- tell me what you want to do when you leave school.

Proposal 2 – a new qualification will replace the present Standard Grade General and Credit levels and Intermediate 1 and 2.
--

Just to give you a little bit of background before we start talking about the qualifications. The changes that the Scottish Government plan to make to the current qualifications are part of a bigger plan to change education in Scotland called Curriculum for Excellence. Have you heard of that? The aim of this plan is to improve the education of children and young people from age 3-18. This would mean that you would learn about a wider range of subjects than you do now, so as well as learning about things like Maths and English you would also spend more time than you currently do on topics such as healthy living and skills needed in the workplace. This would happen up to the end of S3 and in S4 you would begin to study for qualifications.

Show exhibit A – chart with old/new qualifications.

Explain, using the chart to demonstrate:

The chart shows the current qualifications that are done in schools at the moment. I know you're probably all somewhere in the middle of this chart at the moment so I won't go into detail but just to explain the chart, the number up the side indicates how difficult the qualification is – so 1 is the lowest level, it goes up to Foundation Standard Grade at level 3, General Standard Grade at level 4, up to Highers at level 6 and so on. The scale actually goes past 7 up to 12 because it covers everything including honours degrees and PhDs. But we're just going to be talking about the ones up to level 7 which are done in schools.

We are going to be bombarding you with quite a bit of information at times, and might not always explain things very well, and it would be only human to get a bit confused or forget things, so please stop me and ask at any point!

*Q2 – (apart from ‘inclusive’ approach to certification in Standard Grade and ‘unit based’ structure of Intermediate qualifications) are there any other features in the present Standard Grade and Intermediate qualifications which should be included in the new qualification at SCQF levels 4 and 5?*

Note: aim here is just to get any first reactions to loss of Standard Grade and Intermediate, and what they think is good about them

So that’s how things are at the moment. One of the changes the Scottish Government want to make is to get rid of Standard Grades and Intermediate 1 and 2 and replace them with new qualifications. [draw a line through these qualifications on the chart and attach cards with ‘Advanced General’ and ‘General’ to chart]

We’ll talk more about the new qualifications in a minute, but can I just ask what your first reaction is to the fact that Standard Grades and Intermediate qualifications are going to go?

Do you think that’s a good thing/a bad thing? Why?

The new qualifications will be available in a wide range of subjects like Standard Grades and Intermediates are at the moment and most pupils will start them in S4 (Standard Grade courses currently start at the beginning of S3). Pupils will do the level that is best for them and if they are good at a subject might go straight to Advanced General.

*Q3. One of the proposals is to grade units. Do you agree that units should be graded A-C rather than pass/fail?*

The new General and Advanced General qualifications will have units of work like Intermediates and Highers. As you might know, at the moment units of work that are done in Intermediates and Highers are not graded – they are just pass/fail. One of the suggestions is to grade these units, with grades A to C being passes.

If it were you, would you like units to be graded or is it better to keep them as a pass/fail?

Why would you like to have units graded?

Prompt if not mentioned: will pupils take them more seriously? Is getting an A better than getting a pass? What about B or C? would that make you want to work harder? If you work harder it will be noticed? You know if you’re doing well? More useful if fail exam and want to appeal?

Why would you like to keep units as pass/fail?

Prompt if not mentioned: less pressure? Would you rather get a ‘c’ or a pass?

*Q4. Do you want graded units to count towards the final course award?*

*(Don’t need much detailed discussion on this point and - sufficient to get views on the general principle of units counting towards the final award and reasons for this).*

In the new qualification you would complete internally assessed units (the work marked by your teacher) and also an external exam (‘external exam’ is usually held in the school, but the questions are set and marked by external people, not the teachers in the school). If the units are



graded (if ness, acknowledge that some people were against this proposal), would you want them to count towards the grade of your overall mark? So, for example, if you did very well in all your units but not so well in the exam, whether you got an A, B or C at the end would take the units into account.

And if you did very well in the exam but had only just passed all the units, you probably wouldn't get an A overall.

Would you like units to count towards the grade of your overall mark?

Why?

Are there any reasons why you wouldn't want this?

*Q5. Which options for introducing compensatory arrangements would you most support? A to E or alternative.*

Exhibit C – ranking compensatory arrangements

We want to get your views on what should happen if you passed all your units but fail the exam. There have been a number of suggestions – *talk through Cards with Options A to E on each*. What I want you to do now is to rank these options starting with the one you think is best and your reasons why they are good or bad. And if you have another idea, that you think is better than any of these – then you can write that on this blank card.

Keep probing for reasons as they discuss/rank.

Bring up if not mentioned:

A – this option would allow almost all pupils to get a qualification? only A to C seen as 'good' passes?

B – would this work better if units were graded or units were pass/fail?

C – would it be valued by employers/colleges? Would it be confusing for some people to have a graded award and other people to have an ungraded award?

D - too low a level for what they have achieved? Only works if there is a qualification in that subject at the level below.

E – too generous? Unfair on those who studied at the lower level and got an A? Encourages people to go for a level beyond what's appropriate because will get an A at the lower level anyway? Only works if there is a qualification in that subject at the level below.

*If ask – currently get a Grade D for a near miss, at level of course studied.*

*Q6. The proposed name for the new award is General (SCQF 4) and Advanced General (SCQF 5). Please indicate if you are content with this suggestion. If not, please offer an alternative and explain your choice.*

The Scottish Government have suggested that these new qualifications are called 'General' (the one at level 4) and 'Advanced General' (the one at level 5).

What do you think of those names? Why?

Does the name matter?

Can you think of any better names?

Proposal 3. New awards in literacy and numeracy will be available at SCQF levels 3 to 5.

**Q7. Do you agree with the proposal to offer literacy and numeracy awards at a range of SCQF levels (3 to 5). If not please offer an alternative**

Exhibit D -info sheet on literacy and numeracy page 1

## **Exhibit D**

### *New Literacy and Numeracy Awards*

*Why?*

*To make sure everyone leaves school with these important skills. These new qualifications are part of a wider focus on numeracy and literacy throughout the school years. From the beginning of their education, pupils will be encouraged to develop and use these skills.*

*What are they?*

#### Literacy skills

*Being able to listen, talk, read and write to:*

- *communicate with others*
- *reflect on and explain thinking*
- *analyse and interpret information*
- *use language creatively*

#### Numeracy skills

*Being able to:*

- *Add, subtract, divide and multiply. As well as understanding percentages and simple fractions.*
- *Understand time and timetables, why being on time is important and how to manage time.*
- *Use, manage, plan and earn money.*
- *Handle information. This means finding information, being able to understand it and using it when making decisions.*
- *Understand basic statistics such as chance and uncertainty. For example, realising how statistics can be misleading.*

Would you like to have literacy and numeracy awards?

What would be good about introducing these?

What would be bad?

If you were applying for a course or a job, do you think these would be important qualifications to have?

Exhibit D -info sheet on literacy and numeracy page 2. Attach cards with various Literacy and Numeracy awards to chart at appropriate points.

## **Exhibit D**

*How will these awards work?*

*The idea is that almost all pupils will be put forward for both literacy and numeracy (they may not be suitable for pupils with significant learning difficulties)*

*The awards will be offered at levels 3, 4 and 5. Pupils will NOT be expected to do these at every level. Instead each pupil will only achieve one literacy and one numeracy award at the level most suitable for them. The school will probably decide what level is best for each pupil.*

*There won't be classes for literacy or numeracy. Instead pupils will be encouraged to develop these skills in all the subjects they study. This may not be possible in some subjects but should be okay for most subjects.*

*Maths and English will still be offered so pupils can still take these subjects. These pupils will still be expected to get a numeracy and literacy award.*

*Pupils who might not be so good at English or Maths will have the option to just do numeracy and literacy. This means that they will have these important skills but can concentrate on other subjects rather than doing English or Maths.*

Would you still want to do English at General, Advanced General or Higher level?

Would you still want to do Maths at General, Advanced General or Higher level?

**Q10. When should young people be assessed for literacy and numeracy awards?**

The new literacy and numeracy awards will have an external exam. If you were taking the exams when would you most like them to be out of the following three suggestions:

Exhibit F (just A4 sheet held up with the following)

- in the summer at the end of S3
- in the winter of S4
- in the summer at the end of S4

Why?

Prompt if not mentioned:

summer S3 and winter S4 gets them 'out of the way' when probably don't have other exams?

encourages pupils to reach a certain standard earlier?

Later maintains focus on these skills for longer?

Later gives people more chance to reach a higher level/get a better grade?

**Q9. Should the weighting between the internal and external assessments for the literacy and numeracy awards be equal?**

- *Equal weight*
- *More weight to internal assessment*
- *More weight to external assessment*

It is planned that these literacy and numeracy awards will be marked both internally by your class teacher and externally through an exam – in the same way as other subjects. If you were taking these qualifications would you prefer the final mark to be based equally on what you've done in school and the exam, based mostly on what you've done in school or based mostly on the exam?  
Exhibit E

I'm going to give you each a card, write your name on it, and then place it on the sheet to show what you think the final mark should be based on.

Participants place cards, once cards placed, those at the extremes, and middle asked to explain the reasons for their choice. (Ask around 3 participants, depending on where cards placed).

Did anyone have any other reasons?

Does anyone want to change their mind about where they put their card?

## BROAD BASED CURRICULUM AND NOT STUDYING FOR QUALIFICATIONS UNTIL S4

One of the aspects of the *Curriculum for Excellence* that I mentioned briefly earlier, was that pupils have a broad curriculum – in other words, they study lots of different subjects in S1 – S3, and don't start studying for qualifications until S4. This doesn't mean that you would all do the same subjects from S1 to the end of S3 – you would still have a choice about some subjects and the idea is that there would be flexibility for you to choose the things you are most interested in. Your school would decide what the choices were and when you would make them (e.g. there might be some choices at the end of S1 and other choices at the end of S2).

Would you have liked to continue a broader range of topics until the end of S3?

At the moment, you start studying for standard grades in S3 and have exams at the end of S4. Do you think it's a good idea to start studying for qualifications in S4?

Proposal 4 - Increased flexibility to better meet the needs of young people. Suggestions include:

- Studying for National Qualifications over 18 months, or 2 years, as well as one year
- Introducing a winter diet of examinations
- Encouraging the most able young people to bypass lower level qualifications and to study Highers from S4 onwards

One of the things that the Scottish Government is keen to do is to make qualifications system more flexible for pupils. There are several reasons for this:

- there are worries about the different amount of time you spend on different courses. For example, at the moment you have a relatively long time available in S3 and S4 to study for Standard Grades but then have just one year to do Highers in S5 which can be too fast for some people.

- some people think that pupils spend too much time preparing for exams rather than learning new things.

- because school isn't just about you gaining qualifications, it's also about developing other aspects of your life such as health and wellbeing, including physical activity. So there needs to be time for you to do this.

So they have made a few suggestions about how the system could be more flexible.

*Q.11 Do you agree with the proposal to allow the study of Highers and Advanced Highers over 12 months, 18 months and 2 years?*

All of these qualifications (indicate remaining and new qualifications on Exhibit A chart) would be designed so that you could complete them in one school year. But the idea is that they don't *have* to be completed in one year, and some of you might study for General, Advanced General or Highers for example, over 18 months or 2 years.

Would you like to have the option to study courses over different lengths of time?

What subjects would you like to do over 2 years?

What subjects would you like to do over 1 year?

What would be good about studying over 18 mths and 2 years?

Prompt if not mentioned: reduce pressure/slower pace for some? Chance for some people to gain qualifications they wouldn't otherwise have got? More time for other things (other skills, health and wellbeing, physical activity)? Spread exams out (could take a year for stronger subjects and 2 years for weaker ones)?

What would be bad about studying over 18 mths and 2 years?

Prompt if not mentioned: qualifications gained over longer period not valued as much? Difficult for schools to timetable? Not challenging enough/too slow? Too much time spent on other things? Universities/colleges/employers valuing qualifications done over 12 months more than those done over longer periods?

*Q12. Do you agree with proposal to introduce a winter diet of examinations*

Another idea to make the system more flexible is that you could sit the exams in winter as well in the summer, depending on when you started a course and what time period you were doing it over. So, for example, if you were doing a Higher over 18 months, you might start it at the beginning of S5 and then sit the exam in the winter of S6.

What do you think about having winter exams as well as summer exams?

What would be good about doing winter exams?

Prompt if not mentioned: more flexible? Spreads exams out so less pressure?

What would be bad about doing winter exams?

Prompt if not mentioned: if have exams in winter and summer, might feel like 'always' got an exam? Not a good time of year for exams (Christmas parties/shows)? Would before or after Christmas be best?

*Q14. Would you agree with changes to the system which allowed the most able students to bypass qualifications at lower levels and begin study for Highers from S4 onwards?*

One of the other proposals is that if you are very good at a subject, you would not bother with the lower level qualifications (like General or Advanced General) and would start studying for the Higher from S4 onwards. You could then do the Higher over 2 years, with the exam at the end of S5. You'd still cover the coursework for General/Advanced General but you would not have to sit the exam. The benefit of this would be that it allows you more time for other things, it reduces the time spent on external exams (because you are just sitting the Higher exam, rather than, say, the Advanced General and the Higher exam); and it would provide more opportunity for you to take more Higher and Advanced Higher courses in total.

What do you think about this idea?

Would you like the opportunity to bypass the lower qualifications and start studying for the Higher from S4 if you were particularly good at a subject?

*If necessary, explain: they would cover the content of the level 4/5 qual, before moving on to the content of the Higher but would not spend time preparing for and sitting the exams.*

If you bypassed the lower level qualifications, what would be the advantages?

Prompt if not mentioned: less time spent on exams at a lower level of achievement? Less pressure? More time for other things (including more quals at a higher level of achievement if they have the ability and desire to do so)? Better pace? Allow longer/more in depth study for the Higher?

Would bypassing lower level qualification cause you any problems?

Prompt if not mentioned: doing earlier quals/exams give pupils idea of how well they are doing? Easier to choose which Highers to do if you know how well you've done in lower quals? Know better which subjects they enjoy/are interested in? Lack of exam practice? No 'safety net' – refer to previous discussion on compensatory awards – would that help?

Summing up exercise

Exhibit G

I'm going to split you into two groups. Each group will be given cards with statements on them. Please place the cards on the sheet depending on how good or bad an idea you think they are. Once cards placed, groups placing statements at the extremes asked to give their reasons.

Finally, anything else you would like to ask/say? Thank and close.

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