

Reforming Scottish Qualifications: The Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment – Phase 3 Consultation Response from Connect

Connect is a long-standing independent parents' organisation and the only Scottish charity which is dedicated to supporting parental engagement in education. We provide membership services to Parent Councils and PTAs, as well as offering advice and information to individual parents/carers about any aspect of the education of their child or the wider education system.

We support education professionals in developing their skills and understanding around effective partnership working with families and the wider community through online professional learning via the Connect Family Engagement Academy. Our evidence-based approaches reflect both the recognised significant role of families in the learning of their children and young people, and the stated policies and legislation which pertain in Scotland.

Connect has continued to work on the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment, led by Professor Louise Hayward, with the Review Team and the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) to engage with parents and carers in Phase 3 of the Independent Review. Our written response to the Phase 2 consultation, including an overview of our previous work, can be found [here](#). For Phase 3, in partnership with NPFS, Connect has overseen the following activities:

- A national survey on the phase three proposals, which was open to all parents and carers and received 612 responses.
- A focus group for parents of children and young people with additional support needs, which was promoted widely through relevant networks and attended by Professor Hayward.
- A focus group for parents and carers of able children in partnership with The Scottish Network of Able Pupils (SNAP), coordinated by Margaret Sutherland, Professor of High Ability Studies and Inclusive Practice at Glasgow University.
- A focus group for parents from black and ethnic minority communities, in partnership with the West of Scotland Regional Equalities Council (WSREQ).
- A Q&A event with Professor Hayward focusing on the phase three proposals that was open to all parents and carers.

Connect would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of bringing parents and carers along with any changes made. Through the feedback we have gathered, we see parents are passionate defenders for their young people, and they want a qualifications system that works for all. Unfortunately, for many young people this is not currently the case, and we have heard from many who have found high stakes and exam focus does not give their children and young people the opportunities to demonstrate their skills. However, we have also heard from parents who are concerned the changes could have a negative impact on their child. More details and very effective communication are needed about how this will work in practice so parents can be reassured.

We call for the final report to the Scottish Government:

- To recognise the vital role of parents and carers as stakeholders in the new qualifications and assessment system.

Connect

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- To devise a dedicated communication plan for and with parents to ensure parents are kept informed about the changes and the timescales involved, in jargon-free and parent friendly language.
- To be clear about the Personal Pathway section: How will equity of opportunity be ensured for all young people, regardless of their situations or locations? Will young people be able to opt out if they wish, without detriment?

We have submitted a series of parents' questions to the Independent Review team which set out some of the key queries parents would like to have answered as soon as possible. Connect will continue to press for answers to these on behalf of parents and carers. We attach the questions here – these are based on contributions by parents at the online events, by email to Connect and on Connect's Facebook page. The FAQs are not exhaustive, but they do reflect key concerns.

Connect

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Appendix: Parents/carers FAQs from the various events that Connect was involved in, plus Connect's Facebook page

Please explain the three component parts, or sections, of the proposed new Diploma of Achievement, setting out what will be included in each section.

Who, or what organisation, will be in charge of the Diploma?

Will the three parts of the Diploma be graded, or carry credits?

Will there be an overall grade, or mark for the Diploma?

Will the three parts (or whichever parts carry credits or are graded) carry equal weight?

When might this Diploma be introduced?

At what stage of secondary education will young people begin to gather the information (and evidence) of what they have achieved?

Will the evidence be put into a digital record? By whom? Who will check over the Diploma, to confirm it is accurate?

What will happen to the Diploma and the work that is required to complete it, when young people change schools, for whatever reason, or are home-educated, or have interrupted schooling? Will the Diploma be a work in progress that can travel with young people to different settings (or be managed at home)?

How will young people who are home-educated, or who are unable to be in school for whatever reason, access qualifications (whether continuous assessment, exams, or both) and project work?

Will young people be able to opt out of parts of the Diploma without penalty if they wish to, or need to? Eg group project work may be very difficult and painful for some autistic young people.

How will equity of opportunity be ensured for all young people, regardless of their situations or locations, in the Personal Pathway section?

What happens when young people do not achieve the full qualification (although they may achieve credits towards it) and leave school, especially in the context of only having exams at the expected 'exit point'?

What will (or could) the role of digital assessment be?

Will the Diploma model be adaptive to those with additional support needs?

Regarding the online profile: Who controls the data? The school or the child? Who can edit it? Who verifies it? Who gets to see it?