



Curriculum for Excellence: Impact on higher education Final report appendices

**Dr Lesley Doyle, School of Education,
University of Glasgow and Vivienne Brown,
Vivienne Brown Associates
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Appendix 1: number of respondents by sector and by methods of response

Respondents = 43¹	Attended focus group	Engaged online	Completed survey	Individual interview
School = 13	4	1	9	2
S1	✓			
S2	✓	✓		
S3	✓			✓
S4	✓			✓
S5			✓	
S6			✓	
S7			✓	
S8			✓	
S9			✓	
S10			✓	
S11			✓	
S12			✓	
S13			✓	
College = 8	5	3	2	1
C1	✓			
C2	✓	✓		✓
C3	✓			
C4		✓		
C5	✓			
C6	✓	✓		
C7			✓	
C8			✓	
Uni Ancient = 4	3	1	1	1
U1	✓		✓	
U2				✓
U3	✓	✓		
U4	✓			
Uni Plateglass/Robbins = 3	2	1	1	0
U5	✓	✓		
U6	✓			
U7			✓	
Uni Post-'92 = 8	3	2	4	0
U8		✓		
U9	✓			
U10	✓			
U11	✓	✓		
U12			✓	
U13			✓	
U14			✓	
U15			✓	
Schools Bodies = 1	0	0	0	1
S14				✓
College Bodies = 2	1	1	0	1
C9				✓
C10	✓	✓		
HE Bodies = 4	3	1	0	3
U16		✓		✓
U17	✓			✓
U18	✓			✓
U19	✓			
Totals	21	10	17	9

¹ Key to university types: **Ancient**: Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews;

Plate-glass/Robbins: Dundee, Heriot-Watt, Stirling, Strathclyde;

Post-'92: University of Abertay Dundee, Glasgow Caledonian, Edinburgh Napier, Queen Margaret University, The Robert Gordon University, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Scotland's Rural College.

Appendix 2: semi-structured interview schedule

1. What role do you have in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) developments?
2. What, in your view, are the main achievements or progressions for your organisation to date?
3. What are the main outstanding challenges?
4. Have you begun to address them and, if so, how?
5. What adjustments do you think need to be made all the way through the learning system in Scotland?
6. What do you think others should be doing to help your organisation deliver CfE?
7. Have you observed any changes in learners? (Prompt: in respect of them shaping their learning; taking more responsibility for their learning.) If so, have you perceived any impact? (Prompt: on teachers; on your organisation.)
8. Thinking about personalisation and choice - what are your views on the design of the flexible curriculum?
9. In your view, is CfE engaging learners? (Prompt: in setting goals; monitoring and tracking their own progression.) Please explain your answer.
10. If the answer is yes, do you think this learner engagement can continue through educational transitions into other learning sectors? If so, how?
11. Thinking about preparations of young people to enter higher education, how should this transition be managed? What else could be done? Who has responsibility for these developments and why?

Appendix 3: online survey questions

1. Can you briefly list any activities or involvement, if any, you have had to date related to Curriculum for Excellence developments in teaching and learning?
2. Have you identified any challenges or benefits posed by the Curriculum for Excellence developments in respect of teaching and learning at HEIs? If so, what are these?
3. Are there particular challenges and benefits that you might anticipate for specific subjects? What are these?
4. In your view, are there any other challenges and benefits that you might anticipate for universities more generally, thinking about wider service and support areas in addition to the curriculum?
5. Do you think preparation is sufficient or insufficient? Please justify your answer.
6. What areas would you identify for further dialogue between universities and schools and colleges, with a view to ensuring that Curriculum for Excellence prepares young people fully for entry to higher education?
7. What specific questions would you ask schools and colleges about Curriculum for Excellence?
8. Any other comments?
9. Please can you give the name of your institution and your position and also add your email address if you would like more details.

Appendix 4: briefings

The purpose of the briefings was to ensure that participants could have the opportunity to read existing publications and documents relevant to the impact of Curriculum for Excellence on universities and which backgrounded the study, in case they had not already done so. They are not exhaustive and were selected to engage participants in discussion on what the research team identified through desk research as current 'hot topics' that relate to CfE. These included the Senior Phase, transition between phases, assessment across educational phases, access, admissions and the HE first year curriculum. We also invited all participants to suggest further publications or documents for putting online for the groups to read and comment on, though none were forthcoming.

Briefing topics made available to respondents online

1.	<i>Beyond the Senior Phase</i> - report by Universities Scotland
2.	Engaging young people from under-attaining groups
3.	Engaging and empowering first year students through curriculum design; perspectives from the literature
4.	Admissions and articulation
5.	Critical skills
6.	Changes in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) assessments
7.	CfE and the Senior Phase
8.	CfE and learners in FE and HE
9.	Exploring CfE's capacity to generate improvement in HE
10.	Learning, curriculum and assessment at transitions to university
11.	Changes in school education and the implications for universities

Appendix 5: focus group interviews - method employed

1. Focus group leader checks everyone has signed a consent form.
2. Switch recorder on.
3. Leader gives very general introduction to the group on the topic; warm up discussion. Having read the Plain Language Statement (there will be copies in the room), the briefings (also available) and taken part in the online discussions, we would like to know: **in the context of CfE, what do you know about, or what are your views on, the current strengths and weaknesses of learning progression and of qualifications across the sectors** - drivers and barriers to a sustainable and productive dialogue between the sectors to ease transition from CfE to HE (from report).
4. Leader gives out post-it notes (four each).
5. Asks respondents to identify drivers (no conferring).
6. Asks them to stick the post-its on the wall randomly.
7. Then asks group to organise their post-its into themes.
8. Using blank post-its, asks them to give each theme a heading.
9. Gives out four dots each and asks them to put dots on the most important post-its - as many, or as few, dots as they like on any one post-it.
10. Back to the table to discuss what they have done and why.
11. Repeat the whole process above, this time on what they think the barriers are.
12. Then, leader asks respondents what they would like to see for improvements (taking notes).
13. Once finished, leader asks group if he/she has left anything out they think is important.
14. Asks any questions important to the project which the group may have missed out. Recorder will still be running.
15. Use the group's themes and points from the post-its to assist in the transcribing of the focus group interview.

Appendix 6: Plain Language Statement and consent form

Curriculum for Excellence and its impact on higher education

Plain Language Statement

Project Leader: Dr Lesley Doyle, Postgraduate Research Director, School of Education, University of Glasgow

Invitation to take part in the study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study is concerned with how the different learning sectors can come together to identify challenges and opportunities in respect of the learning transitions Scottish students will be making as they move from school or FE into HE in the current changing pedagogical context of the Curriculum for Excellence. These relate specifically to curriculum continuity and progression, assessment, approaches to learning and teaching, and staff development and training.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen either because you have expertise in some way connected to school and/or FE to HEI learning transitions and/or the HEI first year experience or because you are an experienced practitioner.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary and if at any time you wish to withdraw from the project you are at liberty to do so and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be interviewed (30 mins) and then be invited to join either the Core Group of the project, or one of the Practitioner Groups (School, FE or HE) depending on your area of expertise. The details of your involvement below will be explained and discussed with you during the interview.

If you join one of the Practitioner Focus Group interviews, you will be asked to prepare by reading several short briefing documents and to take part in an online discussion forum, with the others in your practitioner group (2 hours in total over a period of 8 weeks). During the online discussion forum and the focus group interview you will be involved in identifying and sharing relevant good practice, bringing your own ideas for future improvement, identifying appropriate reports and articles for consideration and connecting the subject of the study with your own work.

If you join the Core Group you will be asked to participate in a Core Focus Group interview (2 hours) and to attend and observe one of the Practitioner Focus Groups' interviews (2 hours in total), each of which will discuss questions related to the research topic from the perspective of their sector. You will also be invited to take part in an online forum discussion with other Core Group members. To prepare for the online discussions and focus groups, you will be asked to read the same briefing documents as the Practitioner Groups and an anonymised report of their three online forum discussions.

As part of a larger sample for the study, you may also be sent an online survey which you can choose to complete (30 minutes).

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your participation in the study will be confidential as far as possible, taking into account you will be participating in a focus group(s). Also, in later reports or papers your identity will be made anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be written up into a final report and may later be included in academic papers.

Core Group members may wish to know that participants from QAA Scotland and the *Developing and Supporting the Curriculum* Enhancement Theme (see below) will join the online forum and the focus group.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by Dr Lesley Doyle of the University of Glasgow. It comes under the auspices of the Enhancement Theme *Developing and Supporting the Curriculum*. This is an HE sector-wide steering group which owns and manages the research. The research is funded by the QAA. For further information you may wish to visit the Enhancement Themes website at www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes and read further details about the Curriculum for Excellence project at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/developing-and-supporting-the-curriculum/curriculum-for-excellence-and-its-impact-on-higher-education.

Who has reviewed the study?

The University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee has reviewed this study proposal. If participants in the study have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project they can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Professor John McKernan at John.McKernan@glasgow.ac.uk.

Contact for further information

Dr Lesley Doyle, Postgraduate Research Director
School of Education, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow
St Andrew's Building, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow G3 6NH
Tel: 0141 330 1805 Lesley.Doyle@glasgow.ac.uk



Consent Form

Title of Project: The impact of the Curriculum for Excellence on higher education in Scotland

Name of Researcher: Dr Lesley Doyle

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to being interviewed individually.
4. I consent to participating in a focus group interview.
5. I consent to interviews being audio-taped.
6. I understand that I will be referred to only by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.
7. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 7: advisory core group members

A cross-sectoral Core Group was established (11 members) to act in an advisory capacity to the study so their contributions were not included in the data. The group was formed from senior staff from all three learning sectors, selected for their knowledge and expertise within and across the sectors (see Appendix 7). It included the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum (DSC) steering group topic lead and the lead officer from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Group members received the same regular briefings and documents as the sectoral groups and had their own online forum.

The group members provided support by:

- giving advice on policies, procedures and processes to the DSC Lead, the QAA facilitator and researchers
- distributing the online surveys to every school, college and university in Scotland
- signposting to reports and documents relevant to CfE
- reviewing and discussing the interim report to identify gaps, ahead of the focus group interviews
- assisting in improving the robustness and readability of the draft interim report
- acting as non-participant observers in the focus group interviews
- offering their observations on the discussions which took place in the focus group interviews
- agreeing to participate in their own online discussion forum. Although only one person did this in the event, others emailed helpful written comments. Three members were also interviewed and one completed the survey.

Thelma Barron	Assistant Director, QAA Scotland; project facilitator	thelma.barron@gaa.ac.uk
Professor Sally Brown	Emeritus Professor, University of Stirling; Convenor, Royal Society of Edinburgh, Education Committee	s.a.brown@stir.ac.uk
Dr Lena Gray	Head of Policy and New Products, Scottish Qualifications Authority	Lena.Gray@sqa.org.uk
Aileen Hollywood	DO Curriculum Planning Education Scotland	Aileen.Hollywood@education.scotland.gov.uk
Dr Crichton Lang	Deputy Principal, University of the Highlands and Islands	Crichton.Lang@uhi.ac.uk
Duncan Mackay	Coordinator Core and Essential Skills, Scottish Rural College	duncan.mackay@sruc.ac.uk
Lesley MacLennan	Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, University of Aberdeen; Chair, HELOA, Scotland	l.m.maclennan@abdn.ac.uk
Professor Peter McGeorge	Vice-Principal, Learning and Teaching, University of Aberdeen	mcgeorge@abdn.ac.uk
David Mitchell	Head Teacher Bo'ness High School, Falkirk Council; and representative for School Leaders Scotland	david.mitchell@falkirk.gov.uk
Dr Kevin O'Dell	Senior Lecturer and Senior Adviser of Studies, School of Life Sciences, University of Glasgow	Kevin.odell@gla.ac.uk

Professor Alyson Tobin

Professor of Biology,
University of St Andrews;
DSC Steering Group
member and topic lead

a.tobin@st-andrews.ac.uk

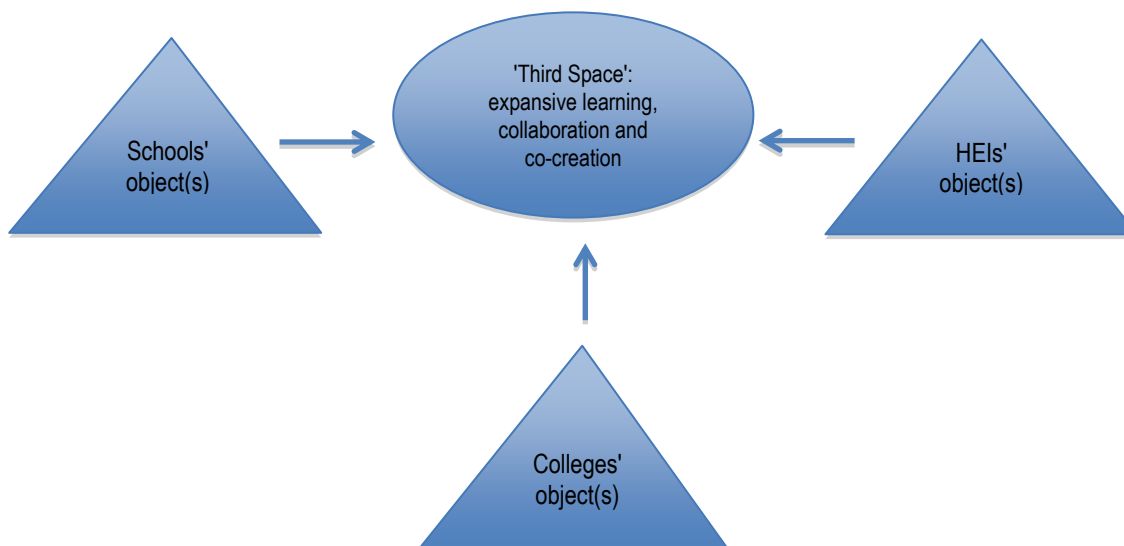
Appendix 8: methodology

To answer the research questions on the impact of CfE on universities, this exploratory study employs a qualitative methodology designed to facilitate the opportunity for respondents from the three sectors (schools, colleges and universities) that are individually and collectively responsible for learners. The methodology encouraged the respondents to focus on their perspectives in relation to their own sector and to express their views openly. In this respect, the study draws on an approach derived from Activity Theory (AT) and expansive learning (Engeström 2001)². AT requires that for between-sector collaboration to work, each sector has to agree on its own 'object' for collaboration necessitating that within-sector exchange is carried out first. This is done in order to lay the basis for a collective 'object' such as, for example, coherent and transparent admissions to HE.

AT has been utilised to guide this study. AT here allows each of the three sectors to be seen as a distinct 'activity system' with its own component parts. The component parts are also activity systems in their own right - for example, each school within the schools sector is an activity system.

Another useful element of AT is the notion of 'expansive learning' (Engeström, 2001) which here assumes that there is no set procedure to follow or training in order for the sectors to progress with CfE. Instead they have to learn together, to co-create something new - for example, a collaboration - from their collective experiences. That is why it is important that they first work out their own 'object' - in order to lay the basis for a collective 'object,' such as (for example) coherent and transparent admissions to HE. Integral to the process is that expansive learning, collaboration and co-creation occur in a 'third space', that is, in neutral 'territory' between the sectors, where the collaboration has a much better chance of success, once the preparatory work has been carried out.

The diagram below helps explain this.



Sample

Forty-three respondents took part in the study. Of these, 50 per cent of college and university staff were lecturers and, from the schools, 35 per cent were teachers. They were invited to join the study based on their positions in relation to current or potential ongoing CfE related work, within or across the three sectors (schools, colleges and universities). All types of HE were

² Engeström, Y (2001) 'Making expansive decisions: An activity-theoretical study of practitioners building collaborative medical care for children', in C. M. Allwood, & M. Selart (eds.), *Decision making: Social and creative dimensions*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

included in the study (Ancient, Plateglass³ and Post-'92) (Appendix 1). The sample was purposive and not representative. Respondents all had one of the following roles: Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher, Principal Teacher, Quality Improvement Officer, Strategic Officer, Lead Teacher Fellow, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, College Principal, College Vice-Principal, Trade Union Representative, Her Majesty's Inspector of Education, Professor, Programme Director, Deputy Director, Programme Leader, Manager, Education Consultant, Assistant Director, Curriculum Manager, Development Manager, Professional Development Officer, Policy Officer, and Development Officer. Details about institutions, organisations and roles in relation to each individual respondent are not given, to preserve respondents' anonymity and confidentiality.

Caveat

It was not within the timeframe or scope of this study to identify a representative sample of respondents and so it cannot be assumed that the findings are reflective of the views of all staff in all schools, colleges and universities in Scotland.

Methods

Data were collected with the following research tools: focus group or individual interview, online discussion forums and online survey. Each respondent engaged in one or more of these methods. The tools ensured the collection of qualitative data in different ways, and potentially also allowed the possibility of triangulation between methods (which was not employed in the analysis) as well as between sectors, which was an important aspect of the study.

- Individual semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 2): the purpose of the interviews was to establish whether information obtained beforehand about the interviewees' involvement and professional interest in CfE was correct, whether they would be prepared to take part in a focus group and online forum, and what their views were on CfE and its potential impact on universities.
- An online survey (see Appendix 3) with nine open-ended questions (customised for each of the three audiences). This was distributed to all members of the DSC steering group, to arrange for completion by each university. It was also distributed to the nominated CfE lead in every college, through the College Development Network; and every secondary school and six local authorities, through the School Leadership Scotland and Education Scotland representatives in the Core Group. The purpose of this was to give as many practitioners as possible the opportunity to contribute their thoughts and views to the study.
- Three discrete online discussion forums (schools, colleges and HE, with up to 10 people in each forum) with regular themed briefings (see below and Appendix 4), questions and documents as the basis for the discussion. The online forums facilitated within-sector respondent discussion on the issues raised in the briefings, and on other issues respondents raised themselves. The online forums also provided preparation for the focus groups.
- Three sectoral focus groups (see Appendix 5 for the approach adopted) were held for those who had also been invited to participate in the online forums. The purpose of the focus group method was to facilitate deeper face-to-face discussion for the online respondents and also to capture the views of others who had not wished to contribute in this way.
- Regular email and telephone updates were held with respondents to maintain their engagement.

Briefings

³ Established in the 1960s following the Robbins report.

From February to May, briefings were made available to respondents through the online forums to ensure that respondents could have the opportunity to read existing publications and documents relevant to the impact of CfE on universities and which provided background to the study, in case they had not already done so. They are not exhaustive and were selected to engage respondents in discussion on what the research team identified, through desk research, as current 'hot topics' that related to CfE. These included the Senior Phase, transition between phases, assessment across educational phases, access, admissions and the HE first year curriculum. We also invited all respondents to suggest further publications or documents for the online forums for the groups to read and comment on, though none were forthcoming.

Data analysis

The data was analysed thematically, employing an adapted version of 'grounded theory'⁴ which eschews a priori themes for those identified *in vivo*, that is, in the words of the respondents. The software program NVivo was used to speed up the process and to help with cross-sectoral data triangulation to help compare the responses between the three sectors. At the same time, due regard was paid to existing knowledge and understanding (Layder, 1968)⁵ around CfE and its impact on universities, as evidenced by the briefings read by the researchers and made available to the respondents to comment on, as outlined above. Potentially, the methods employed would also have allowed for triangulation of methods. However, this would have added too much time on to the study and the numbers were small, even though the responses provided 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), that is, rich data. Similarly, although mindful of the particular nuances likely to occur in the different types of HE institution (Ancient, Plateglass/Robbins and Post-92), the study did not include this in the analysis, or the potential influence of respondents' roles (management/teacher/national organisation officer and so on) on their perspectives.

Ethical approval

The study was reviewed and approved by the University of Glasgow's College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (see Appendix 6 for the Plain Language Statement and consent form).

⁴ Glaser, Barney G and Strauss, Anselm L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company

⁵ Layder, Derek (1998) *Sociological Practice: Linking Theory and Research*, London: Sage



QAA Scotland
183 St Vincent St
Glasgow G2 5QD

Tel 0141 572 3420
Fax 0141 572 3421
Email enhancement@qaa.ac.uk

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