



Scottish Qualifications Authority
Ughdarras Theisteanas Na H-Alba

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This response from SQA is in relation to Education (Scotland) Bill introduced by the Scottish Government on 23 March 2015.

According to the Policy Memorandum, one of the specific aims of the Bill is to:

- *“Place a duty on education authorities both to assess the need for Gaelic medium primary education following a parental request and to actively promote and support Gaelic medium education (GME) and Gaelic learner education; the Bill will also place a duty on Bòrd na Gàidhlig to prepare guidance on how GME should operate in Scotland;”*

SQA's views on this area and response to the Committee's questions relating to Gaelic are given below:

10. How significant a change in Gaelic medium primary education will the Bill deliver? Do you agree these provisions should be limited to primary schooling?

These provisions should not be limited to primary schooling, and should consider Secondary Education in both Broad General Education and Senior Phase. When making decisions on whether or not to enrol children in GME, it is important that parents are given information on provision from Primary and Secondary to be shown progression routes so that pupils can sustain and develop their Gaelic skills. Increasing numbers of children in GME at primary level are not resulting in a commensurate increase in secondary school and in Senior Phase. This year has, in fact, shown a decrease in numbers being presented for SQA qualifications in the medium of Gaelic

11. What are the most appropriate ways for education authorities, particularly those with low levels of Gaelic usage, to promote and support Gaelic medium education and Gaelic learner education? What impact is this promotional work likely to have on the Gaelic language and the number of Gaelic speakers?

Although historical connections to Gaelic language and/or demand for Gaelic learning opportunities may vary from region to region, Local Authorities need to be

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guided by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and should provide consistent messages. SQA provision should be promoted to show to progression routes available when moving from Primary to Secondary education. As part of Gaelic Language Plans, Local Authorities should signpost Gaelic (Learners) and Gaelic-Medium learning opportunities which should include partnership working between organisations.

Promotional work should explain the benefits of bilingual education also make clear the differences between Gaelic (Learners) education and Gaelic-Medium education. SQA has published allocation guidance which takes Primary Education into consideration, and so this information should be shared with parents and education providers.

Local Authorities should bear in mind that Colleges can also deliver SQA National Qualifications and partnerships can be established between schools and colleges. This year there have been candidate entries for National 5 History in the Medium of Gaelic at Edinburgh College and so it is important to highlight provision outwith secondary school environments and encourage partnerships in areas where provision is lacking

13. Under existing legislation, education authorities must have regard to Bord na Gaidhlig's education guidance when they are producing their annual statement of improvement objectives. What will the requirement in this bill add to this?

Local Authorities will have to review and act both on guidance from Bòrd na Gàidhlig (to be published in future) along with requirements of the Bill.

14. Overall, to what extent will the Bill help to deliver the Scottish Government's commitments to grow and strengthen Gaelic education?

The Bill has potential to help grow and strengthen Gaelic Education. It should also, however, include a meaningful commitment to Secondary Education to ensure a sustainable model is developed, enabling the continuation of learners' exposure to the language throughout their Secondary education.

The Summary of Outcomes of in The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-2017 includes reference to increasing the number of children enrolling in GME, an increase in the number of pupils engaged in Gaelic learner education in both primary and secondary schools, and aims for an expansion of the availability of Gaelic Medium subjects in secondary schools. These subjects should be nationally agreed and if the aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan are to be achieved then more attention needs to be given to planning to grow numbers in Gaelic Education from 3-18 years and not just at Primary level.

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SQA appreciates and welcomes any efforts to increase the numbers of children enrolling in GME. While this Bill focuses on legislation relating to Primary Education, a sustainability model should be created to enable progression.

With the increasing number of children receiving GME Primary Education Local Authorities must be able to ensure that GME continues at secondary level - during the Broad General Education phase and resulting with certification in the Senior Phase.

SQA has raised concerns at a national level regarding the low numbers of candidates progressing from Gaelic-medium Primary and their broad general education in Secondary and undertaking Gaelic Medium qualifications in the Senior Phase. There are number of causal factors - in particular teacher recruitment - but unless effective solutions are found in the immediate and mid-term, language skills which underpin the effective continuation of Gaelic language competencies in an English-dominant environment will not be retained in a meaningful way by large numbers of young learners. To ensure the successful continuation of Gaelic-medium education and encourage young learners to consider careers as Gaelic-medium teachers, there has to be support for continuity of exposure to the language.

In academic year 2014-15 SQA has seen a decrease in candidate entries for subjects in the medium of Gaelic in the Senior phase. There is an immediate need for an effective solution to resource the profession to enable them to teach through the medium of Gaelic, to enable the continuation of young learners' exposure to the language throughout their Senior Phase.

Page 11 of the Bill states that "Gaelic Medium education means teaching and learning by means of the Gaelic language". At no point in the Bill is assessment in the medium of Gaelic mentioned, and SQA would stress that this has an important role to play in measuring the success and achievement of candidates Gaelic Medium education experience.

Work on National Strategies on Secondary and Adult Learning should continue and be given increased prominence. A clear strategy for GME from Primary to Secondary level is essential. Consistent and comprehensive delivery of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic should be the aim from ages 3-18.