In response to your request for information from organisations who have experience of working with various of the educational bodies in Scotland, I am keen to add a perspective from the geographical community in Scotland.

We have worked with several of the educational bodies in question, and we are concerned at the scale of cuts to these bodies that affect their ability to support teachers and schools in the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Our experience with Education Scotland as a provider of geographical resources to schools has been largely positive, but there has been a significant reduction in staffing, which will unquestionably lead to a reduction in their ability to create and provide resources and to support teachers going forwards.

Our experience, however, with the SQA is more mixed. Whilst we again recognise that funding constraints have impacted their ability to deliver what is significant change, we also have concerns about some of the practicalities in this delivery, many of which are shared by the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers amongst others. We have found that the implementation of National courses has proved overly rigid, and where the SQA has sought advice it has not been sought as widely or as timeously as it could have been. Teachers have reported consistently that the guidance given is unclear and has therefore been open to a variety of interpretations, leading to inconsistent implementation across Scotland. Although advice on marking structures appropriate to Geography was offered, it was largely ignored, and the current system is widely regarded as being too rigid and inappropriate to the subject; no allowance was made for this despite repeated concerns. This has led to frustration and we believe increases the danger of narrowing grade boundaries.

This lack of clarity and inconsistency in interpretation, combined with a lack of resources during a critical stage of curricular change, has led to significant pressure on teachers and students alike, and we fear will lead to a deterioration in the integrity and popularity of our subject. We remain committed to the development of skills and knowledge and understanding within the subject, and to its equitable availability and delivery across Scotland. Geography has an invaluable role to play in developing responsible citizens especially in relation to sustainable development education and global citizenship.

Kind regards

Mike Robinson
Chief Executive
Royal Scottish Geographical Society