Introduction

1. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Education and Skills Committee on Curriculum for Excellence governance.

Curriculum for Excellence

2. Curriculum for Excellence was developed as a result of the Scottish Parliament’s Education, Culture and Sport Committee’s Inquiry into the purposes of Scottish Education and the National Debate on Education over 2002 and 2003. Initial work was taken forward by the Curriculum Review Group which reported to Ministers in 2004, followed by the Curriculum Review Programme Board which published a progress report in 2006. The Curriculum Review Programme Board’s members included local authorities, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Learning and Teaching Scotland and HMIE and was the predecessor body to the current Curriculum for Excellence Management Board.

Policy

3. Ultimate responsibility for decision making on national education policy rests with Scottish Government Ministers.

4. The Curriculum for Excellence Management Board was established in its current form in 2008. It brings together all parts of the education system in Scotland to ensure that all perspectives are included in the overview of the new curriculum, and in the provision of informed advice to Ministers where required. The purpose of the Management Board is to secure the effective adoption of Curriculum for Excellence policies and approaches across Scottish education, in the interests of the learners of Scotland.

5. It pursues this objective by bringing together the Government, delivery bodies and stakeholders to perform the following functions:

- discussing revising, agreeing and where necessary considering further development of the underpinning national policy framework for Curriculum for Excellence
- collectively holding to account delivery organisations for their contribution to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence – while recognising the specific governance and accountability arrangements which apply to those bodies
- sharing and highlighting stakeholders’ perspective on all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence
• considering evidence of the benefits for learners delivered by Curriculum for Excellence
• identifying issues which need to be addressed if Curriculum for Excellence is to be successful, and seeking action on those issues.

6. The Curriculum for Excellence Management Board is convened and chaired by the Scottish Government. Its membership is as follows:

- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Association of Headteachers & Deputes in Scotland (AHDS)
- College Development Network
- Community Learning and Development Manager Group
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Education Scotland
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)
- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)
- NASUWT
- National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS)
- Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
- School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
- Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)
- Scottish Government (Chair and Secretariat)
- Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC)
- Scottish Secondary Teachers’ Association (SSTA)
- Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
- Universities Scotland

7. Ministers may receive formal advice from the Management Board, and general advice to Ministers from officials will be informed by the views of the Board.

8. Over the years, the Management Board has been supported by a number of sub-groups which have provided advice on specific issues. One such example is the Qualifications Governing Group, established in 2009 to develop the original design principles of the qualifications that were subsequently agreed by Management Board (membership included ADES, EIS, HMIE, SQA, SSTA, Scottish Government, SLS and Scotland’s Colleges). A “Reflections” Group, which reported to the Management Board, considered lessons to be learned from the first years of the new national qualifications (membership: ADES, EIS, Education Scotland, GTCS, NPFS, SQA, NASUWT, Scottish Government and SLS). This built on the earlier work of a separate Curriculum for Excellence Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy which made recommendations to address excessive bureaucracy. The work of these latter two groups is now taken forward by the Assessment and National Qualifications Group, which includes representatives from most of the organisations on Management Board, together with other education and assessment experts. It was established in January 2016 to consider and make recommendations (based on emerging evidence and experience of the operation of the new National Qualifications) on:

• the policy framework (including design principles) within which qualifications are developed and operate
• assessment policy and practice from age 3 to 18, and the best means of supporting improvements.

Since August 2016, the Deputy First Minister has chaired the Assessment and National Qualifications Group.

Implementation

9. The Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Group, first met in 2012 and is chaired by the Chief Executive of Education Scotland. This brings together key organisations who are directly responsible for major aspects of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, turning the policy set by Ministers drawing on advice from the Management Board into changes in practice on the ground. It provides a mechanism for planning, co-ordination and for identifying and jointly addressing key issues with a view to resolving them and so achieving successful outcomes. It plays a central role in ensuring safe delivery. It seeks to achieve alignment and coherence across Curriculum for Excellence, and maintains an overview of progress with delivery. It has responsibility for the programme management of Curriculum for Excellence implementation through the Implementation Plan (which has been published annually) and the detailed management of associated risks and issues. It provides reports to each Management Board meeting on progress and risks to successful implementation, and brings forward issues for consideration to the Board, including escalation of risk where necessary.

10. The Group’s membership consists of officials from ADES, College Development Network, Education Scotland, SQA, the Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Government and SDS. As well as providing collective oversight, each organisation is also responsible for its own activities in delivering Curriculum for Excellence.

11. While the framework for Curriculum for Excellence was (and continues to be) set nationally, decisions regarding the detail of delivery rest with Local Authorities, their schools and teachers. In turn, in planning and delivering learning, these local bodies are expected to consult with the wider community, parents and learners themselves on a curriculum appropriate for the local context. Local Authorities are expected to offer clear guidance to their schools on how they should go about developing a curriculum appropriate for the local circumstances, and head teachers are responsible for the day-to-day implementation, management and organisation of the curriculum.

12. In addition, organisations represented on the Management Board and the Implementation Group may have their own specific governance arrangements – for example, the SQA Board of Management oversees all of the activities of SQA including its contribution to Curriculum for Excellence.

13. As implementation has progressed, Ministers have agreed a number of adjustments to the planned programme, and a number of additional support measures taken in consultation with stakeholders. These include providing additional funding and extra in-service days for teachers and the provision of more detailed course materials and subject events for teachers in 2012 to support implementation of the National Qualifications. National bodies such as Education Scotland and SQA have provided
enhanced support and resources in response to requests from the system at various points in the implementation process.

Next steps

14. The OECD review, *Improving Schools in Scotland: AN OECD Perspective* (2015) specifically discussed Curriculum for Excellence governance. It states that “the CfE Management board, comprising a wide range of representative stakeholders in Scottish education, occupies a central position in directing Curriculum for Excellence. This arrangement has been well fitted to the task of implementing CfE as a Scotland-wide curriculum programme. That task required consensus and managing processes so that implementation, including of assessment and qualifications, would happen as smoothly as possible.”

15. The report also recognised that, as Curriculum for Excellence moves beyond the initial implementation phase, a new approach to governance would be required. This is being considered through the Education Governance Review, which is taking a whole system approach, including the leadership roles that national government and national bodies could take going forward, and the framework that they will operate within.

Scottish Government/Education Scotland
January 2017