

AREP CURRICULUM REFORM – WORKING GROUP ON HISTORY QUALIFICATIONS

Meeting One – 30 October 2024 – Note of Discussion

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair for the first meeting, John Booth, warmly welcomed all to the first meeting of this important new working group on the history qualifications.

It was noted that the new group represents an important opportunity to bring together government bodies with teachers and organisations with expertise and insights to shape reform, and to include and centre the views of learners. Around the 'table' there was an exciting and formidable range of skills, expertise and lived experience and a desire to help drive change.

It was emphasised that there was a lot going on in education and that this programme of work fits well into the wider system ambitions to ensure the continuous improvement of the curriculum and meaningful engagement with teachers, drawing on their knowledge and experience from classrooms, to inform the design and implementation of qualifications reform.

All members introduced themselves. Apologies were received from [REDACTED] who had a meeting clash, and [REDACTED] was unable to attend due to connection problems.

2. Background and Context

Members were referred to Papers 1 and 2 for this agenda item, seeking to set the scene on how we got to this position and what we want to collectively work towards.

[REDACTED] and Iain presented briefly on key issues regarding the policy context and the SQA process for change with an opportunity for queries and clarity on where the group have scope to influence.

It was anticipated that most of the changes attached to the immediate remit of the group would fall within the context of critical changes to current courses but that broader discussion and ambition would likely feed into the wider qualifications reform and development of new qualifications. The SQA change processes had clear timelines for consultation and implementation and it would be June 2027 before critical changes would be part of the live qualifications process.

The importance of working within a complex and moving landscape and retaining our focus on tangible and clear recommendations and actions was emphasised.

3. Draft Terms of Reference

Members were referred to Paper 3 which sets out the remit, membership and meeting schedule for the group.

Members discussed the paper and where change or clarity was required and the following points were flagged:

Remit and working together

- The importance of consensus as far as possible and recording where there are alternative views.
- A likely requirement for additional small discussions to focus on details in-between full meetings of the group.
- Consider steps in the process which will involve some creativity and "workshopping" for in-person or hybrid meeting.

Other suggested input and engagement for consideration

- Guest speaker – [REDACTED] – Oxford University, research in history examined curriculum in England
- [REDACTED], City of Glasgow Council social studies knowledge and skills review lead

Engage young people

- Scottish undergraduate historians at Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling to be approached for engagement (but important to note that school and university expectations are distinct).
- SQA Learner Panel involvement - meets monthly in schools
- Seek other established groups with similar purpose rather than create a new group
- Broughton High School social studies department
- Intercultural Youth Scotland or anti-racist clubs
- Individual young people that are informed and keen to participate.

The Terms of Reference document would be updated as required to address the above points if necessary and regarded as final.

[REDACTED] to action invitations and proposal for young people engagement for consideration.

4. Work Planning

Members were referred to the history qualifications - areas of study paper.

[REDACTED] shared a quick summary of areas previously covered to prompt discussion on what priorities for change are (noted in the Annex).

The following points were made in discussion:

- It was agreed that the remit of the group should include qualifications from National 3 through to Advanced Higher.
- Support was expressed for the issues on the list shared (see Annex)
- It was noted that while there was an understanding of the rationale for splitting study into Scottish and British, the European and World, that with the

exception of one topic in Advanced Higher they reflected Europe and the Western World, and no Global South options.

- As one of the most popular topics at Higher - the Britain and Democracy paper - it was suggested that it might be a good focal point with a refresh in gender/votes for women aspect, Trade Union Rights, Race Relations, LGBT rights in 1960s and 1970s. [REDACTED] offered to present on how this could be structured and focused at a future meeting. This was of interest to the group but more aligned to future reform than the short-term remit of the group.
- It was highlighted that decolonisation and its impact on Britain as part of democracy and political processes was largely absent and that inclusion of the history of South Asia and Latin America would be ideal to include and introduce good comparative thinking re democratisations, revolutions and change.
- Following the response to the IRQA, the SQA are starting the process of internal considerations on a longer-term reform of history. This has included ambitions to review the structure and a 'breadth and depth' approach would be explored alongside considerations on what would need be dropped to accommodate new topics at a future date. Other key questions involved whether there should be a history core curriculum tied in with the BGE with colonialism embedded and assessed from Nat4 and 5. Learning from systems outwith UK was underway with a view to appraising a range of options, including those for radical change, in history topics.
- A breakdown of numbers in relation to exam centres and topics was requested.
- It was noted that much of the discussion on breadth and depth of history chimes with the ambition of the Independent Review of Qualification and Assessment to encourage Inter-Disciplinary Learning projects as exciting opportunities central to a reformed curriculum.
- Reminder that the process of introducing new or expanding topics needs to be balanced with reflections on what can be removed.
- Recognition that parts of the system will not be as engaged in these debates and we will need to approach 'with caution' and take people with us and ensure opportunities to engage.

Members welcomed the opportunity to reflect on longer-term ambitions and opportunities within the context of the group discussions but recognised that the immediate remit would be focused on change in the current history framework. While the two were compatible we would need to be cognisant of wider reform work being led separately in parts of SQA, Education Scotland and Scottish Government.

5. Next steps

[REDACTED] will follow up with note of the discussion including further clarity on the remit and interactions with wider reform.

The next meeting would be 27 November and key areas to cover would be:

- Capturing the key priorities for change.
- Revised workplan to reflect discussions.
- Discussing proposal for engaging young people in the process and the output.

- Potential for input from [REDACTED] Glasgow Council and [REDACTED] to prompt further discussion on identifying and refining priorities.

The Chair thanked all for contributions and such a positive start to the working group.

Members

John Booth, Director of Communications and Executive Sponsor at SQA for anti-racism in education, SQA **Co-chair**

[REDACTED] in Curriculum and Qualifications Division, with policy lead for range of curricular areas including social studies, anti-racist curriculum, LfS, expressive arts, languages and English/Literacy, Scottish Government **Co-chair**

[REDACTED], Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)
[REDACTED], education consultant

[REDACTED], St Thomas of Aquin's

[REDACTED], South Lanarkshire Council

[REDACTED], University of Glasgow

[REDACTED], Holyrood Secondary School

[REDACTED], SQA

[REDACTED], Education Scotland

Iain Morrison, Head of Humanities, Care and Services Qualifications Development, SQA

[REDACTED] Scottish Government

[REDACTED], Scottish Government [joined from Item 4]

[REDACTED], Scottish Government **secretariat**

ANNEX

Possible areas for focus in current course framework:

Inclusion of the Holocaust within WWII

Bengal Famine within WWII

The Trade in Enslaved African people, 1770–1807

Review of American Civil Rights Movement

Empire and Migration

Britain and Ireland

Possible areas for focus on future course framework:

Partition of India

Indian colonial history more broadly, and The opium trade Indian, Scottish, Chinese involvement

African and South America history

UK Civil Rights Movement and immigration (incl Windrush)

Breadth studies (depth)

Thematic studies: (England) Inventions and pioneers - Medicine through time

Migration to Britain – exam boards in England underpinned by resources

Other curriculum areas eg maths and STEM

'In Britain, we are still astonishingly ignorant': the hidden story of how ancient India shaped the west https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/sep/01/hidden-story-ancient-india-west-maths-astronomy-historians?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other