



## Consultation on Measuring the Attainment Gap and Milestones towards Closing It

### RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name  
 Publish response only (without name)  
 Do not publish response

#### Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes  
 No

## Consultation on Measuring the Attainment Gap and Milestones towards Closing It Questionnaire

Q1: Have we based these proposals on the right principles?

In focusing on SIMD as the key indicator, we are concerned that stretch aims set by SIMD quintile may not accurately target those most at risk of not reaching their full potential. Half of those receiving free school meals, or attending a school with low progression rate to Higher Education do not live in SIMD20. Such a measure would also be unlikely to capture children and young people living in foster care or residential units as these homes tend to be cited outside SIMD40 areas.

The Blueprint for Fairness report published in 2016, and the adjoining technical paper, critically analysed the data available in the education system to establish the most robust and comprehensive measures which could potentially be used to identify individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. The report concluded that a more individualised approach to identify those from disadvantaged groups would need to be adopted across the whole education system to be effective, but that a sophisticated and targeted approach would allow for better support and guidance to be directed to individuals. At the time of publication, the report concluded that robust and valid data did not currently exist to implement such an approach across all access work in Scotland, but recommended that by 2018 a consistent and robust set of measures should be developed to identify access students.

Research carried out for the Scottish Funding Council, published in their project report entitled *“Mapping and evaluating the use of contextual” data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland* found that broad-brush identifiers such as the area where the individual lives, or the school they attend, are generally less valid than those which refer to personal circumstances of the individual and/or their household.

Whilst this report is not looking specifically at attainment, but rather at how to contextually evaluate the capacity of an individual to enter, progress and achieve at higher education level, these areas correlate and overlap. In developing the National Improvement Framework and specifically measuring the attainment gap and milestones, a whole system approach across schools, colleges and universities will be greater than the sum of siloed efforts at each.

Whilst we agree that measures and milestones should be relatively simple to measure and report against, we would caution against this as a principal. The framework should be nuanced and holistic of individual circumstances, and any agreed measures and milestones should not be simplified at the expense of detailed and robust analysis.

Q2: Do you agree with having a basket of key measures to assess the progress made?

Yes

Q3: Are the proposed key measures the right ones?

Colleges Scotland is comfortable with the proposed measures at Primary level. Given that the transition from Primary to Secondary is so meaningful in a child's life, it may be appropriate to consider if measures at S1 or S2 should be added.

Q4: Will this approach avoid the introduction of perverse incentives?

Q5: Is 3rd level the right measure to use of attainment at S3?

It may not be the appropriate measure for some groups of children and young people, including those with additional support needs, disabilities, or English as an additional language.

Q6: Does the use of SCQF levels reflect a sound approach to measuring senior phase attainment? Are there other options such as Insight tariff points?

Colleges Scotland is comfortable with SCQF being used as the level to measure senior phase attainment.

Q7: How best we can give more meaning/clarity to the terms "SCQF 5" and "SCQF 6" so they are accessible to all?

Any attempt to give more clarity or meaning to SCQF should involve supporting children, young people and the influencers around them to better understand what SCQF is and how to use it for making informed decisions about progress and the individual learner journey.

Q8: Are these the right sub-measures? Are there others that should be included?

Colleges Scotland is comfortable with the proposed sub-measures, and particularly welcomes the inclusion of mental wellbeing scoring for secondary phase children. Consideration should be given to how measures can be approached for children and young people who do not define themselves within a binary gender.

Q9: Is the use of stretch aims, by SIMD quintile, the right way to set milestones?

As evidenced in our response to Q1, the use of SIMD as a measure is not without challenges but at present it is the best and most appropriate data set available. In this iteration of the NIF, using stretch aims by SIMD quintile is appropriate, however moving forward a more robust and nuanced measure, developed in partnership with those working on policy to widen access to post-16 education, should be considered.

Q10: Are the stretch aims set at the right level?

Do you have any other comments on this consultation on measuring the attainment gap and milestones towards closing it?

As proposed in other education-focused reviews, such as the Commission on Widening Access, a unique identifier which allows children and young people to be tracked throughout the duration of their education should be implemented. Such a measure would allow for thorough and individualised review of action to measure and close the attainment gap.

When reflecting on the attainment gap, and milestones towards closing it, research by Gorard and Siddiqui shows a negative gradient between each additional year an individual is entitled to free school meals, and attainment. Any action to tackle the attainment gap must therefore be nuanced and consider how best to support the attainment of children and young people with lengthy experience of poverty.