

Annual Statutory Review of the NIF

Dear Colleague,

We welcome the opportunity to provide views as part of the annual statutory review of the National Improvement Framework (NIF).

As the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland our work involves maintaining and promoting teaching standards, and it is from this standpoint that we offer our input. We have 2 main points to raise with respect to teaching standards and system oversight.

Firstly, it is essential that the NIF reflects the importance that the system enacts teaching standards – GTC Scotland’s suite of Professional Standards and the Code of Conduct and Professionalism. Teaching standards are central to achieving the NIF outcome of ensuring ‘Highly skilled teachers and school-leaders driving excellent learning, teaching and assessment for all, especially those with additional support needs.’ We continue to call for all stakeholders to embed teaching standards in their work and hold firm on the high standards we have for Scotland’s teachers.

Secondly, we are in strong agreement that we need to have a self-improving and connected learning system. We have long been calling for joined up and coherent system regulation – by this, we mean oversight to ensure the quality, safety and effectiveness of education services in Scotland. Effective system regulation is foundational to the NIF outcome of achieving ‘a globally respected, empowered, and responsive education system with clear accountability at every level that supports children, young people, and adult learners to thrive. The system enables the development of their knowledge, skills, values, and attributes that give them the best opportunity to succeed and contribute to Scotland’s society and economy’.

We note the reference to the development of the Quads initiative presumably being developed as an element towards better achieving this NIF outcome. Sharing best practice and seeking better consistency are of course important elements of a self-improving system. This however does not go far enough. We must determine and put in place coherent system regulation for education services - part of this role would be to ensure such quads initiatives are sustained and working well. In the absence of (or lack of clarity about) such

mechanisms it continues to be difficult as a system to ensure that information is visible and identified issues are addressed to provide improved public confidence in Scottish education. The clear accountability the NIF seeks would be better served with clarity about oversight – coherent system regulation.

We have been calling for this clarity to be provided by considering how the independent inspectorate, which is currently consulting on its reframed role in inspection following the passage of the Education (Scotland) Act 2025, could play a role.

The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) endorsement of the NIF is encouraging, and we agree that focusing on implementation and communication is key. We would add the need to consider oversight arrangements that better inform implementation and communication, including with the public. The ICEA's emphasis on the central importance of the teaching profession reflects the 5 manifesto priorities that we recently published in advance of the Scottish Parliament elections. These are:

1. Understanding and valuing teaching
2. A refreshed teacher education and development framework
3. Supporting structures for teacher development
4. Teacher supply, recruitment, retention and promotion
5. Working together to create a coherent system of regulation

[Read our manifesto priorities.](#)

We trust our comments will be of value.



The General Teaching Council for Scotland

We are the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland. We work to enhance trust in teachers in the public interest by setting, upholding and promoting high standards.

Website: www.gtcs.org.uk

Email: gtcs@gtcs.org.uk