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Submitted to Review of National Outcomes: call for evidence
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Questions

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About you

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:

EAUC Scotland

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

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I consent

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:

Slightly satisfied

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Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:

Very satisfied

Please enter comments here.:

Review of National Outcomes: call for evidence

Response by EAUC-Scotland, June 2023

In this call for evidence, we propose suggestions for changes to the National Outcomes, which are based on consultation with our Advisory Group, views that have reached us independently from our members through conversations and discussions at events, as well as our own expertise as an organisation working with a variety of tertiary education stakeholders across Scotland, including all its colleges and universities.

Proposed changes to the Outcomes

Emphasising links between outcomes

While the outcomes cover a breadth of aspects, which is a clear strength, stronger links should be made clear within the framework between the outcomes, rather than having some of them in isolation. While we see this as a need for all outcomes, below we will specifically address the Environment outcome and its links to the Education outcome, which also has implications for the Economy, and Fair Work and Business, and Health outcomes.

We see the need for clear links to be made between the Education and the Environment outcomes to highlight the importance and need of education to integrate environmental aspects across curricula and learning programmes. This is crucial to achieve awareness and behaviour change regarding the environment in our population in order to progress towards achieving the Environment outcome. It also contributes to the goal of equipping people of all ages to be “well educated, skilled, and able to contribute to society” (Education outcome) in the face of multiple current and emerging environmental crises, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

As our Advisory Group, consisting of senior leaders and management staff in Scottish universities and colleges, phrased it:

“I agree about the environment being siloed and at first glance it isn’t progressive enough. It’s imperative that there is a link to education here and vice versa in education... all areas of education. There is no point in having a beautiful, green country if our citizens don’t have an understanding of what has happened environmentally in the past to Scotland, and beyond, for them to really ‘buy in’ and be willing to make adjustments to combat climate change, loss of biodiversity etc. Excluding this gives room to exploit it as a loophole.”

This also links in with aspects of the Health outcome, specifically mental health – which we believe should be more specifically addressed in the outcomes in general – and [increasing worries and anxieties around climate change](#) that can be addressed by education.

Furthermore, with Scotland’s transition to Net Zero by 2045, and a 75% reduction by 2030, the Economy and Fair Work and Business outcomes need to be clearly linked with the Environment and Education outcomes. The demand for green jobs in Scotland is rising, as a report by [Skills Development Scotland in November 2022](#) showed. To support this demand, and ultimately our goal of reaching Net Zero by 2045, education must provide opportunities and support for people of all ages to reskill for or enter green jobs. This is in line with other influential governmental targets and

policies, such as the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) (NSET) emphasising the decade to come as a 'decisive decade', particularly regarding environmental challenges, and the [Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan](#) (CESAP), which is currently being refreshed with specific input from an Education subgroup.

Equally integrating social, economic, and environmental aspects

Social and economic values and aspects are currently integrated across most of the outcomes - however, environmental aspects in the framing of the outcomes are mostly confined to the Environment outcome. This calls for improvements, as impacts on the environment will also impact all other indicators, and the National Outcomes should recognise this to reflect the complex reality of our world. Environmental sustainability should be integrated across the outcomes to the same extent as social and economic responsibility, and the language used in the outcomes ought to reflect this.

An outcome for interconnectedness

The SDGs represent the interconnectedness of outcomes to a certain extent with goal 17, Partnerships. This goal highlights the importance of collaboration and recognising the intertwined nature of social, environmental, and economic issues. We see an opportunity, if not a need, for the National Outcomes to consider adding an outcome that emphasises the necessity of collaboration and ensures that different agendas work in parallel to achieve a more socially, environmentally, and economically just and sustainable future.

Changes proposed to the National Indicators

One of our members phrased their view on indicators as:

“Indicators are a big glaring gap in the NPF.”

Two themes arose from conversations regarding the indicators to close this gap:

Alignment with current policies and linking indicators

The views of college and university staff emerging from discussions made clear that they feel indicators need to much more strongly align with current policies, such as the CESAP, the NSET, and the National Discussion on Education, the National Improvement Framework, and others. We see it as vitally important for the National Outcomes to bring together other developments and policies, rather than just being an additional framework.

For example, the Environment outcome does not make any reference to Net Zero or [Public Bodies Climate Change Duties \(PBCCD\)](#), despite Net Zero by 2045 being a key goal in Scotland. While greenhouse gas emissions are represented in the economy indicator, Environment indicators should more closely look at the current progress towards Net Zero, for example by referencing PBCCD data.

In addition, the development of skills to tackle the climate emergency together, highlighted for example in the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan, should be a key indicator and presents another example of how indicators can link the Education, Environment, Economy, and Fair Work and Business outcome.

Increased representation of Further and Higher Education

Furthermore, Further and Higher Education is vastly underrepresented in the Education outcome indicators:

“FE/HE is very under-represented in the NO:Education to the point there is a current disconnect between the NIF [National Improvement Framework] and the NPF. (...) NIF lays out greater direction for Learning for Sustainability inclusive of culture, heritage, environment as well as social justice – the NPF will surely mirror this with a major emphasis on Learning for Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development being a right of every learner in the education system (not just nursery and school age).”

This underrepresentation hinders, on the one hand, the ability to obtain clear answers from the data on whether this outcome is being achieved, and on the other hand, more widely presents a barrier for education to be understood as a lifelong process and opportunity for all. The adult education landscape in Scotland is vast and has a considerable impact on people’s lives, and currently specifically the offer of colleges is underrepresented as it goes beyond the work-based learning indicator and other indicators that specifically focus on children and young people. Learning does not end after school and is not confined to the workplace. The indicators must reflect this.

Impact of the Outcomes on the work of colleges and universities

Our perception is that the impact of the National Outcomes on Scottish Further and Higher Education has potential to grow, but is currently low due to limited awareness and “some educators having low knowledge of NPF and NIF”, as one of our members phrased it:

“Talked about or mentioned once or twice a year by myself and team but have rarely heard any senior leaders across the sector mention them. Although much has changed since the last launch of the NPF so perhaps with some more publicity they will reach more sets of eyes”

The outcomes form a strong framework that includes values and manages the difficult task of balancing breadth with relevance to the Scottish context. We think that increasing awareness of the framework and encouraging it to form the base of institutional strategies and policies in the tertiary education sector could have a strong impact on progressing towards meeting the outcomes. One way to do this is to integrate indicators from colleges and universities in the outcomes, and ensuring that these outcomes are seen as interdependent and strived for simultaneously rather than separately, as discussed in the previous sections.

Furthermore, if not already achieved, funding from Scottish Government to public bodies and wider organisations should align with the National Outcomes. Recipients of funding should be held accountable for delivering and reporting against the outcomes and their indicators. This would further support awareness raising as well as operationalise the outcomes in organisations across Scotland.

Obstacles and barriers in the further implementation of the National Outcomes

As addressed above, we see the following as major barriers to the implementation of the National outcomes currently:

- A missing link to other policies, strategies, and affairs, such as NSET, CESAP, or the upcoming changes to the Scottish education system, will continue to hinder the implementation of the

outcomes while also missing the opportunity to support these policies and push into the same direction.

- Missing links and connections between the outcomes may impede progress. For example, regarding the Environment outcome, one of our members stated: "To not have integration between economy and sustainability is inconsistent with [the government's] own targets."
- Language that is inclusive of social and economic, but not environmental factors, will impede awareness of the inextricable connection of these aspects, and therefore hinder collaborative progress across all the outcomes.
- The lack of awareness about the outcomes among public bodies, such as colleges and universities, presents another barrier to implementation. Increasing awareness and showing how these contexts and the outcomes relate (e.g. by including more indicators specially in the education outcome) could improve this.
- An apparently missing link between Scottish Government funding for public bodies and the outcome indicators impedes awareness and accountability that would support operationalisation and implementation of the outcomes.