CLD Standards Council Scotland

Response
to

Review of Qualifications Scotland's quality management arrangements

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About Us

The CLD Standards Council Scotland, as the **P**rofessional **R**egistration and **S**tandards **B**ody (PRSB), is a place where Community Learning and Development professionals, students and volunteers can share information and learn from each other. We are a membership-based organisation, a Scotland-wide community of people committed to improving lives and supporting communities.

We believe that the work done by our members across the country really matters. We always aim to nurture their personal and professional development. That, in turn, helps them support and strengthen the communities they work in.

A further strand of our work is to set and maintain standards for what is expected from people working or volunteering in CLD across Scotland. We do that by approving college and university courses, supporting qualification pathways development, and by bringing our members together to share knowledge, learning and good practice, and to uphold collectively agreed standards from those working in our sector.

As a Scotland-wide organisation supporting those who are delivering essential work across the country's diverse communities, we are committed to using our collective voice to influence and inform those who lead, manage and fund CLD. As a member-led organisation we have a growing membership of over 3500 members, an executive committee and three functional committees which are made up of members from across the CLD sector in Scotland. Our approach and work plans to deliver our core responsibilities are defined by our member committees and based on feedback from the wider membership.

Our ministerially set core responsibilities are:

- Ensure the learning offered across our approved learning institutions is fit for the future needs of the profession.
- Develop and implement an inclusive and progressive tiered practitioner registration system.
- Establish baseline Professional Learning (PL) requirements for registered practitioners.
- Consolidate a sector-wide leadership role in relation to CLD workforce learning, practice standards, and qualifications.
- Develop our organisational governance and capability to transition towards a revised governance, funding, and operating model.

Vision

"Our vision is that the communities and people of Scotland are served by CLD practitioners that are recognised as competent, confident and committed to equality, empowerment and life-wide learning for all."

Mission

"Our mission is to drive high standards of professional practice in the CLD sector by the approval of professional learning, the registration of practitioners and the enabling of professional development, working with our members to be a voice for the profession."

The CLD Standards Council works with a wide range of organisations across CLD and education sectors, nationally and internationally. We are members of a number of organisations, some we have specific partnership or framework agreements with, and we engage and work with many others.

Organisations we have formal agreements with:

- AIEB (All Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training)
- COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Education Scotland
- GTCS (General Teaching Council Scotland)

- JETS (Joint Education and Training Standards – UK & Republic of Ireland)
- NATECLA (National Association for Teaching English and Other Community Languages to Adults)
- SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries)
- Volunteer Scotland

Organisations we have membership of:

- BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minority Infrastructure in Scotland)
- CDAS (Community Development Alliance)
- Human Rights Consortium Scotland
- IACD (International Association for Community Development)
- Inclusion Scotland
- PARN (Professional Association of Research Networks)
- SCDI (Scottish Council for Development & Industry)
- SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)
- TAG:PALYCW (The Professional Association of Lecturers in Youth and Community Work)

Key Stakeholders and Partner Organisations:

- Alliance of Commonwealth Youth Work Associations (ACWYA)
- CLD Managers Scotland
- CLD Professional Learning Networks
- College Development Network
- CWA (Community Work Australia)
- LEAD Scotland (Linking Education and Disability Scotland)
- Learning Link Scotland
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Open University
- SCDC (Scottish Community Development Centre)
- SCDN (Scottish Community Development Network)
- Scotland's Learning Partnership
- The Young Women's Movement
- WEA (Workers' Educational Association)
- YMCA Scotland
- Youth Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- Youth 1st (Fife)
- Youth Highland
- Young Scot

For further information on the CLD Standards Council please visit our website and view our social media cldstandards | Twitter, Facebook | Linktree. If you would like to discuss this response further, please email us on contact@cldstandardscouncil.org.uk

About Community Learning and Development in Scotland

Community Learning and Development is a strategic and essential field of professional practice within Scotland's education and economic development systems. It is critical to the successful implementation of education, equality and community focused policy and legislation, particularly where these aim to reduce inequality, improve life chances and remove barriers to learning. CLD supports lifelong learning, empowerment, social justice, and participation, while also strengthening families, communities and the delivery of wider public services.

The CLD sector is a unification of the three professional practice disciplines of Adult Learning (Including ESOL), Community Development and Youth Work, and was recently reviewed and reported on in Learning: For All. For Life. A report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD), which was undertaken by Ms Kate Still, as part of Education Reform, and commissioned by Mr Graeme Dey MSP, the then Minister for Higher and Further Education, and Veterans. It clearly evidences how CLD plays a vital role in meeting the diverse and often complex educational needs of people of all ages across Scotland, including children, young people and adults with additional support needs (ASN) and those affected by poverty, trauma, disability, health needs, caring responsibilities, language barriers or social exclusion. Through accessible, inclusive and community-based approaches, CLD responds directly to individual circumstances, lived experience and local priorities, ensuring that learning opportunities are flexible, relational, needs led, and rooted in trust.

Supporting Children, Young People and Families
For children and young people, CLD through CLD youth work, provides early intervention, prevention and targeted support for those who may struggle to engage with formal education or require additional or alternative non-traditional pathways to thrive. CLD creates safe, supportive and relationship-based environments where learners with ASN can access education, and develop confidence, communication skills, resilience and wellbeing at their own pace.

CLD youth work supports learning for life, learning, and work by:

- Building social, emotional and interpersonal skills
- Strengthening voice, agency and participation in decision making
- Supporting transitions into adulthood, training, education or employment
- Promoting inclusion, anti-discriminatory practice and positive identity

Importantly, CLD works with families as empathetic partners in learning, recognising that supporting parents, carers and siblings is crucial to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people with ASN. This whole family and community-based approach helps reduce isolation, increase understanding of support systems and strengthen relationships between learners, families, educational settings, services and communities.

Supporting Adults with Additional Support Needs
For adults, CLD plays a critical role in supporting those with additional support needs to re-engage with learning, particularly where previous experiences of formal education have been negative or inaccessible. CLD adult learning addresses core areas such as literacy, numeracy, digital inclusion, employability, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), health and wellbeing, parenting and independent living skills. These learning opportunities are especially vital for adults who:

- Experience disability or long-term health conditions
- Face poverty, unemployment or financial insecurity
- Have caring responsibilities or experience social isolation
- Require additional support to access education, services or work

Through strengths based, trauma informed and person-centred practice, CLD enables adults to build confidence, develop transferable skills and progress towards further learning, training, volunteering or employment, thereby improving outcomes not only for individuals, but also for their families and communities.

A Holistic, Community Based Approach
Across all age groups, CLD adopts a flexible, learner centred and inclusive approach, combining informal and non-formal learning with community engagement and development practice. Learning is codesigned with learners to ensure it is relevant, levelled, empowering and responsive to individual and collective need, including any additional support needs. By supporting people to identify personal and shared goals, CLD strengthens community capacity, enhances democratic participation and contributes to wider social, economic and environmental outcomes, including improved health, wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability. This community-based infrastructure is particularly important for reducing inequality and ensuring that learners with ASN and their families are not left behind.

An Integrated Professional Discipline
The three interconnected domains of CLD (Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work) work together as a single, unified professional discipline to contribute to Scotland's National Outcomes. The impact of CLD is greatest when these domains operate in unison, enabling whole family and whole community approaches to change. For example, CLD youth work supporting young people with additional support needs around confidence, employability or equality is significantly strengthened when complemented by community-based adult learning and community development that engage parents, carers and local communities to lead inclusive change. Guided by the National Performance Framework, along with the Competencies, Values and Ethics for the sector, CLD is a vital educative force that should be strengthened through focused legislation, recognition and investment.

Values-Based Practice
Fundamental to CLD practice across all settings are the values identified by the CLD Standards Council:

- **Self-determination** – Respecting individuals and valuing the right of people to make their own choices, including how they access learning and support.
- **Inclusion** – Valuing equality of opportunity and outcome, and actively challenging discriminatory practice, particularly for those with additional support needs.
- **Empowerment** – Increasing the ability of individuals, families and communities to influence decisions that affect their lives through individual and collective action.
- **Working collaboratively** – Maximising partnership working across services, sectors and communities, including meaningful collaboration with learners and families.
- **Promotion of lifelong learning** – Ensuring that learning is accessible at any stage of life and adaptable to changing needs and circumstances.

Legislative Context
In Scotland, CLD is underpinned by legislation through the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013, located within Section 2 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. These Regulations require each local authority to publish a three year CLD plan setting out how CLD activity, including support for learners with additional support needs and their communities, will be delivered locally, as outlined in the Community Learning and Development Plans Guidance 2024–2027. HMIE also produced the Evaluation of Community Learning and Development in Scotland, alongside the wider piece around Education Reform in Scotland.

CLD has its origins in the period of change that swept through society in the 18th and 19th centuries. New industries, and changes in science, technology, land use and education dislocated or smashed traditional forms of family and community life, with the history of youth work starting with voluntary action through faith organisations. Over time, we saw the further development of adult and young people's education with development of the Workers Educational Association and the National Council of Labour Colleges, and then the growth of community development as a response to the "rediscovery of poverty" in the 1960's. The

Alexander Report – Adult Education: the challenge of change (HMSO 1975) was a response to the persistent issues of disadvantage and advocated that "*Adult education should be regarded as an aspect of community education and should with the youth and community service, be incorporated into a community education service*". In 1998, Mr Brian Wilson MP established a working group to "*consider a national strategy for community based adult education, youth work and educational support for community development in the light of Government priorities in relation to social inclusion and lifelong learning*" (Communities: Change Through Learning. P14). In 2004, the Scottish Executive published Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities, stating "*Community learning and development should incorporate the best of practice undertaken in the fields of 'community education' and 'community development'. It should enable individuals and communities to make real changes to their lives through community action and community-based learning. CLD is an approach which enables agencies to work with communities and provide access to their involvement in learning, action, and decision-making*." These advancements were fundamental in bringing about the birth of CLD in the form it has grown into in the 21st century.

The following diagram was used in the 2012 Strategic Guidance on CLD for Community Planning Partnerships to illustrate the policy context for CLD in Scotland and continues to provide a useful picture of the pivotal role of CLD.



This response was compiled on behalf of the members of the CLD Standards Council.

Assumptions:

It is important to note that this CLD Standards Council response reflects insights gathered from online engagement with members, and consultation with staff team regarding this guidance, as well as previous engagement with members through consultation activities and online professional learning opportunities. As such, it provides an indication of member views and experiences but should not be considered fully representative of the entire CLD sector in Scotland or the full CLD Standards Council membership.

Response from the CLD Standards Council to Independent Review of Qualifications Scotland's arrangements to ensure the quality of qualifications

Scottish Ministers commissioned an independent review to provide an evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of Qualification Scotland's arrangements for assuring the quality of its qualifications. The review examined whether existing quality management processes were transparent, fair, reliable, and aligned with the expectations of Scotland's qualifications system. While the review did not consider wider education reform, curriculum design, or assessment design, it sought to identify opportunities for improvement and draw on comparative evidence to inform future decision-making.

As part of this process, stakeholders were invited to share their views on how Qualification Scotland's quality management arrangements operated and how they could be strengthened in the future. The survey sought feedback across the full qualifications' lifecycle, including qualification development, assessment and marking processes, centre-based quality assurance, and other mechanisms used to maintain standards and public confidence.

The purpose of this report is to present our responses to the four survey questions, drawing on our experience and expertise to highlight strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement within 's quality management arrangements. Our responses were intended to support the independent review by providing constructive, evidence-informed perspectives on how quality assurance processes could best maintain confidence, consistency, and fairness across Scotland's qualifications system.

This report sets out our response to the survey, presenting our views on the effectiveness of current quality assurance arrangements and outlining recommendations for future development. The report is structured around the four survey questions and reflects our experience and perspectives on ensuring qualifications which impact the CLD sector remain credible, consistent, and responsive to the needs of learners, practitioners, centres, and employers.

Question 1.
What kind of educational/training establishment do you work in?

Other (please specify):
CLD Standards Council Scotland, the professional body for Community Learning and Development (CLD) practitioners in Scotland.
The CLD Standards Council has ministerially set responsibilities which include delivering a professional approvals structure for qualifications, courses and development opportunities for people involved in CLD, maintaining a registration system for practitioners, and supporting professional learning and development. Our interest in this consultation therefore particularly relates to professional standards, registration, professional learning, workforce pathways and the quality and integrity of qualifications and assessed learning delivered within CLD settings.
CLD encompasses Adult Learning, Community Development and Youth Work and is an integral part of Scotland's education and lifelong learning system. Importantly, CLD is not simply discretionary community provision. It has a statutory underpinning through the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013. These Regulations place requirements on education authorities in relation to the provision of CLD and their duties to secure adequate and efficient provision.
Specifically, education authorities are required to maintain a process which identifies target individuals and groups, has regard to their CLD needs, assesses the extent to which those needs are being met, and identifies barriers to adequate and efficient provision. They are also required to involve and consult representatives of learners and CLD providers, and to publish three-year plans setting out provision, coordination with other providers and needs that will not be met.
This statutory context reinforces the importance of national qualification and quality arrangements properly recognising learning delivered through CLD and community settings, alongside provision delivered through schools and colleges.

This is further supported by Learning: For All. For Life, the Independent Review of CLD led by Kate Still. The Review emphasises that CLD can be delivered as both a service and an approach, including by local authorities, colleges, universities and the Third Sector, and stresses that learners should be reassured that CLD is delivered professionally, against accepted standards, by suitably trained, experienced or qualified staff and volunteers.
Our response to this survey therefore primarily focuses on **professional standards, registration, professional learning, qualification pathways and the quality and integrity of assessed learning delivered within CLD**.

Question 2.

Are there aspects of quality management and internal regulation that you think Qualifications Scotland does particularly well?

The CLD Standards Council welcomes the importance placed on maintaining consistent standards and confidence in qualifications, including internal and external verification and support for those delivering and assessing qualifications.
We recognise the value of Scotland having a qualifications framework which enables learning and achievement at different levels to be recognised and valued. In our submission to the Hayward Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment, we advocated for learners to have access to the range of qualifications available across SCQF levels, recognising that these provide ***"a variety of assessment, reflection and review techniques that can be matched to individual learner needs."***
This flexibility is particularly important when considering community-based learning. CLD practitioners across local authorities, the third sector and other organisations deliver learning and accreditation to young people and adults, including people who may not be participating in traditional school, college or training environments. Our Hayward response highlighted the role CLD practitioners already play in delivering and assessing accredited learning and developing skills that support employability and improved life chances.
We also recognise the value of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Our responses to both the Hayward Review and the Withers Skills Delivery Independent Review emphasised that correctly recognising prior skills, learning and experience through effective assessment and recording is important in enabling person centred learning and supporting an educational culture that recognises lifelong and life-wide learning, as well as multiple pathways into further learning and employment.
National Occupational Standards (NOS) can also provide consistency within vocational learning. Our Withers submission noted that NOS provide a consistent definition of standards, while also identifying a need for greater understanding amongst employers about how they can be used and clearer distinction between an occupational standard and a teaching unit.
We also believe there is value in quality arrangements recognising that learning takes place across a much wider range of settings than schools and colleges. The Still Report: Learning: For All. For Life. reinforces this point. It describes CLD as a service, delivered by a range of organisations including local authorities, colleges, universities and the Third Sector. Crucially for quality assurance, the Review argues that learners should have confidence that those delivering CLD are working professionally, underpinned by values, ethics and principles, and meeting standards designed to provide consistency and quality irrespective of who is delivering. It goes further in stating that CLD should be taken forward in line with accepted standards and by suitably trained, experienced or qualified staff and/or volunteers.
This aligns particularly strongly with the CLD Standards Council's role and interests in professional registration, professional approval, professional learning and maintaining standards. The setting in which learning takes place should not determine the value attached to that learning or the quality expected of it. Scotland's quality arrangements should be capable of recognising high-quality assessed learning wherever it is delivered.
From our perspective, the strongest quality arrangements are therefore those which provide confidence and consistency in standards while allowing sufficient flexibility to recognise different learners, learning environments and pathways to achievement.

Question 3.
Are there aspects that could be improved?

We see opportunities for improvement in four connected areas: representation of community-based learning; ownership and currency of qualifications; connection with professional standards; and responsiveness to learners and the workforce.

Community-based learning needs stronger representation.
Qualification and quality discussions can lean heavily towards provision delivered within schools and colleges. This critically risks underrepresenting community-based adult learning and learning undertaken by young people and adults outside traditional educational establishments.
This should not be viewed simply as a matter of sector representation. There is a statutory context. The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 place requirements on education authorities in relation to CLD secured within their areas. This includes identifying target individuals and groups and their CLD needs, assessing the extent to which those needs are already being met, and identifying barriers to adequate and efficient provision. Education authorities must also involve and consult representatives of learners and CLD providers in that process.
There is therefore a strong case for Scotland's national qualifications and quality infrastructure to recognise the community-based learning landscape within which these statutory responsibilities operate. While the statutory duty itself rests with education authorities, national qualification arrangements can either support or create barriers to local authorities and partners developing meaningful pathways for learners.
This is reinforced by the Still Report, which places CLD firmly within the wider lifelong-learning landscape and describes it as a service that can be delivered by local authorities and a wide range of partners.
Our earlier Hayward response made a similar argument from the learner perspective, calling for Scottish education to recognise learning **"*beyond the classroom*"** and greater parity between formal and informal achievement, recognising lifelong and life-wide learning.
We would therefore welcome stronger and more systematic representation of community-based learning providers, CLD professional expertise and practitioners who deliver assessed learning within qualification development, review and quality assurance.

Clear ownership and continuing validity of qualifications
An important concern emerging from our own professional discussions is the need for clear and continuing ownership of qualifications. Practitioners have highlighted examples where qualifications for CLD or being delivered by CLD have not been reviewed for considerable periods, or where responsibility for updating qualifications, associated assessment support material and maintaining their continuing relevance is unclear. This can weaken confidence in qualifications and create gaps which individual providers or practitioners are not necessarily in a position to resolve. We therefore believe quality management should include clear responsibility for the continuing currency, review and supporting assessment materials of each qualification, as well as assurance of its delivery.
This concern is consistent with our earlier submission to the Withers Skills Delivery Independent Review, where the CLD Standards Council argued that:
"The current time lag in introducing new qualifications undermines the value employers and learners attach to these awards."
The subsequent Withers Review considered how Scotland could develop a more agile, people-centred skills system and recommended a clear remit for the successor qualifications body in overseeing the development and accreditation of publicly funded post-school qualifications.
We therefore see ownership, currency and continuing relevance as essential elements of quality, rather than quality assurance beginning only once a qualification is being delivered.

Professional standards and competence
Quality assurance should consider not only whether assessment and verification processes have been followed correctly, but whether appropriate professional expertise supports the design, delivery and assessment of a qualification.

This principle now has strong independent support in the Still Report. The Review argues that learners should be reassured that those delivering CLD are operating professionally, underpinned by values, ethics and principles, and meeting standards designed to provide greater consistency and quality regardless of who delivers the learning. It concludes that CLD needs to be taken forward in line with accepted standards and by **"*suitably trained, experienced or qualified staff and/or volunteers.*"**
For CLD qualifications and assessed learning, we believe this strengthens the case for clearer recognition of appropriate CLD professional qualifications, knowledge, competences and current sector experience among those involved in design, delivery, assessment and quality assurance.
This is not about restricting who can provide learning. It is about ensuring that wherever CLD learning takes place, there are appropriate safeguards around professional competence, standards and quality.

Assessment should support the learner
Quality assessment needs sufficient flexibility to accommodate different learners and forms of learning. In our Hayward response we advocated an approach in which:
"*education is adapted to meet need, not the learner/learning adapted to meet assessment need.*"
We also cautioned **"*A final certificate can become binary i.e. viewed as pass / fail. The recognition and recording of the detail of the personal, academic and vocational achievements contained within may be lost*."** These remain relevant quality principles. Assessment must provide confidence that standards have been achieved, but the system should also recognise competence, progression and wider learning where these are integral to the qualification and learner journey.

Question 4.
Do you have any other comments on arrangements to ensure the quality of qualifications?

The CLD Standards Council believes that quality assurance should be viewed as part of a wider system of professional standards, registration, professional learning and workforce development, rather than principally as a compliance process.

Learning from the CLD Standards Council's approach to professional approval
One potential lesson comes from our own approach to approvals. A key role of the CLD Standards Council is professional approval of qualifications for the CLD sector. As described in our 2026 Future School Reform response:
"*This quality assurance is a peer-driven process and covers a wide range of educational programmes from initial introduction qualifications such as access and PDAs, through to degree level and above*." CLD Standards Council approval demonstrates that these learning opportunities are underpinned by the Competent CLD Practitioner Framework, encompassing professional values, principles, Code of Ethics and CLD competences.

Our experience suggests there is considerable value in technical and professional quality assurance complementing each other. Peer-led professional scrutiny allows consideration not simply of whether assessment processes are being followed, but whether qualifications remain connected and therefore relevant to contemporary professional practice, competences, values and ethics.
We would therefore welcome more systematic involvement of recognised professional bodies and appropriately qualified practitioners throughout the qualification's lifecycle.

Registration and professional learning form part of the quality system
Qualifications should not be considered in isolation from the workforce that delivers them. Professional registration provides a mechanism through which professional identity and standards can be strengthened, while continuing professional learning enables practitioners to maintain and develop competence as practice, qualifications and assessment methods change.
Our Hayward response made this connection particularly clearly in relation to digital developments:

"*Digital pedagogy needs to be embedded in all learning and teaching environments from early years to beyond school environments. Up to date professional learning for all practitioners needs to be available alongside ethical and competence training*."
These issues are increasingly relevant as qualifications respond to technological change. The final Hayward Review also identified technological change, including AI, as part of the changing environment to which future qualifications need to respond.

Quality must work beyond schools and colleges
Scotland's qualifications system needs to reflect learning wherever it happens. Community-based learning is particularly important for adults and young people over 16 who may be outside traditional educational settings, including learners for whom community provision provides an accessible route back into learning, qualifications, employment or further education.
This is consistent with the statutory position of CLD. The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 require education authorities to identify target individuals and groups, consider their learning and development needs, assess how far those needs are being met and identify barriers to adequate and efficient provision. The Regulations also require involvement and consultation with people representing learners and those providing CLD.
The CLD Standards Council has consistently argued through the Hayward and Withers reviews for a genuinely lifelong and life-wide approach to education in Scotland, recognising different pathways and giving appropriate value to vocational, professional, technical, formal and non-formal learning.

Quality assurance within a statutory CLD landscape
The need for national quality arrangements to recognise community-based learning is reinforced by the legal and policy context within which CLD is delivered in Scotland. The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 are particularly relevant. The Regulations place requirements on education authorities in carrying out their duties to secure adequate and efficient provision. In relation to CLD, authorities must maintain a process which identifies target groups and their needs, assesses the extent to which those needs are being met, and identifies barriers to adequate and efficient provision.

There is also an important partnership dimension to these legal requirements. Education authorities are required to involve and consult representatives of both target individuals and groups and organisations providing CLD. Their statutory three-year plans must specify how the authority will coordinate its CLD provision with other providers, what the authority and other providers intend to deliver, and any CLD needs which will remain unmet.

We recognise that these statutory responsibilities sit with education authorities rather than Qualifications Scotland. However, they demonstrate that community-based learning occupies a formal place within Scotland's education system. National qualification, assessment and quality systems should therefore be sufficiently inclusive and responsive to enable education authorities and their partners to fulfil these responsibilities and to create meaningful qualification and progression pathways for learners accessing education through CLD. Quality arrangements which are predominantly designed around school and college delivery risk overlooking the circumstances, providers and practitioners through which many learners access community-based learning.

Independent evidence supporting professional standards
The Still Report, Learning: For All. For Life. provides further independent evidence for this approach. Commissioned by the Minister for Higher and Further Education and Veterans, the Review places particular emphasis on CLD's role for vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and communities and argues that there is no "wrong or less-esteemed path", whether people's learning takes place through college, school, work, university or a community initiative.

Particularly relevant to this survey, the Review argues that learners need assurance that CLD is being delivered professionally, underpinned by values, ethics and principles and against standards which provide consistency and quality, irrespective of provider. It states that CLD should be delivered in line with accepted

standards and by suitably trained, experienced or qualified staff and volunteers. This closely reflects the CLD Standards Council's approach to quality through the relationship between professional approval, professional registration, practitioner competence and continuing professional learning.

Our own peer-driven professional and developmental approval process provides an example of how technical qualification assurance and professional assurance can complement one another. As set out in our 2026 Future School Reform response, CLD Standards Council professional and developmental approval covers learning from introductory and PDA programmes through to degree level and above, with approved provision underpinned by the Competent CLD Practitioner Framework, including CLD values, principles, Code of Ethics and competences.

Clear qualification ownership and pathways

Quality also requires confidence that qualifications remain current after they are introduced. Where ownership for reviewing a qualification, maintaining assessment support material or responding to changing professional requirements becomes unclear, there is a risk that qualifications cease to reflect contemporary practice.

We would therefore encourage Qualifications Scotland to build clear ownership, regular consideration of continuing relevance, and routes for practitioners and professional bodies to identify concerns about currency or assessment materials into the quality management lifecycle.

This also connects with the need for coherent learner and workforce pathways. The CLD Standards Council continues to work on mapping CLD pathways and identifying gaps between qualifications at different SCQF levels. Our previous submission highlighted the need for **"*cohesive naming and recognition of the CLD qualifications at all levels*"**, allowing learners and practitioners to understand routes into and through the profession.

Workforce capacity is a quality issue

Maintaining the quality of qualifications requires appropriate investment in the practitioners who deliver and assess learning. Access to recognised professional qualifications, continuing professional learning, support to maintain occupational competence and clear pathways for progression all contribute to sustainable quality.

Taken together, we would encourage Qualifications Scotland to adopt a broad conception of quality that connects:

- robust assessment and verification
- clear ownership and continuing currency of qualifications
- professional and occupational standards
- registration and professional recognition
- appropriately qualified and supported practitioners
- sustained professional learning
- accessibility and inclusion
- representation of community-based learning
- coherent SCQF and workforce pathways
- meaningful involvement of professional bodies and the practitioners using and delivering qualifications

Taken together, the statutory CLD framework, the findings of the Still Review and our previous evidence to the Hayward and Withers reviews point towards the need for a genuinely lifelong and life-wide approach to qualification quality. The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 establish requirements on education authorities around identifying CLD needs, barriers, consultation, coordination and planning. The Still Review reinforces the importance of professional delivery, accepted standards and suitably trained, experienced or qualified practitioners, regardless of the setting in which CLD is delivered. These principles are also consistent with positions previously advanced by the CLD Standards Council through its responses to the Hayward and Withers reviews.

Quality therefore cannot be measured solely through the reliability of an assessment or compliance with verification processes. It should also consider whether qualifications remain current and professionally

credible; whether there is clear responsibility for their ongoing review and supporting assessment materials; whether they are supported by suitably qualified, experienced and professionally supported practitioners; whether learners can access and progress through coherent pathways; and whether the system works equally well for learning delivered in communities as it does for learning delivered in institutions.

For the CLD Standards Council, this connects directly to our strategic responsibilities around professional approval, registration, professional learning and maintaining standards. These responsibilities have been central to our previous engagement on qualifications and assessment, including our Hayward response, which highlighted CLD practitioners' role in delivering learning and accreditation and called for recognition of lifelong and life-wide learning, community-based outcomes and alternative learning pathways. Our Withers response similarly called for a lifelong learning framework that recognises vocational, professional and technical competencies and argued for a more responsive approach to the development of qualifications.

We would therefore welcome a quality framework in which Qualifications Scotland works systematically with recognised professional bodies and practitioners to ensure that qualifications remain current, credible and connected to professional practice, and which recognises community-based learning as an integral part of Scotland's lifelong learning and qualifications landscape.

References:

Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013

Evaluation of community learning and development in Scotland | National thematic inspections | Inspection reports | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland

The Still Report: Learning: For All. For Life.

Withers Skills Delivery Independent Review

Hayward Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

2026 Future School Reform

Competent CLD Practitioner Framework