

# **Proposed Schools (Residential Outdoor Education) (Scotland) Bill**

## **Introduction**

A proposal for a Bill to ensure that young people have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education.

The consultation runs from 29 April 2022 to 22 July 2022

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

*No Response*

## **About you**

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.  
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

*No Response*

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Representative organisation (trade union, professional association)

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Only give the name of your organisation if you are submitting a response on its behalf).  
(Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

Universities Scotland

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response.  
Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

## Aim and approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

Fully supportive

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Reasoning:

Universities Scotland, representing Scotland's 19 universities are supportive of this proposed Bill as we

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

consider there to be helpful evidence of the educational and wider benefits that outdoor education offers young people across Scotland. We see this enhancing the learner experience whilst at school and we also see strong complementarity between the benefits that accrue to pupils whilst at school and how this would assist them as school-leavers to move onto university, as one possible positive destination.

There is complementarity in the skill set development in residential outdoor education and that valued and developed further in higher education

As the consultation document sets out, outdoor residential education can deliver benefits in: relationships, pupil confidence, resilience, engagement and transitions. As a significant percentage of undergraduate entrants to university are from Scotland's schools, we see complementarity between these skills and the attributes that universities look for in entrants, as part of the admissions process, and that are also helpful to students as they progress through education. The skill set mentioned in the consultation document is complementary to the meta skills that universities then further develop in their students so there would be a natural progression of this approach throughout different stages of learning.

We believe there is a strong connection between the objective of extending the availability of residential outdoor education, as proposed in the consultation, and the principles and aims of the Curriculum for Excellence. As Philip Simpson has noted in his thesis, Residential Outdoor Education in Scotland: "the four capacities for A Curriculum for Excellence, developing successful learners, developing confident individuals, developing responsible citizens and developing effective contributors, can all be realised in outdoor education." The embedding of outdoor learning through this Bill could prove useful to pupils for whatever destination they follow after school.

Furthermore, outdoor residential trips may be the first time that many young people are away from home, mixing with people outside their usual social group, and expanding their horizons and acceptance of other people. This is a good developmental experience that raises aspirations and also prepares young people for a potential experience at university.

#### A link to widening access in higher education

We see potential benefits in the move to make outdoor residential education more widely available to all school pupils between the ages of 12-16 as linked to the widening access agenda in higher education. Universities are on a journey to widen access, with a target of recruiting 20 per cent of entrants from the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland by 2030 (as measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). Universities are on track with this objective and have exceeded the interim milestones set for 2021 however, the next phase from 2022 to 2030 has been acknowledged as being the "hardest mile" by the outgoing Commissioner.

Any and all actions taken in school-level education to equalise opportunities across all groups of students, build confidence and aspiration and raise attainment is likely to also support the strategic priority of widening access to university. By equalising access to outdoor education to at least a minimal level, the Bill offers the potential to support widening access to higher education. As noted by the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) at present: "the number of secondary school inspection reports that highlighted residential experience decreases as the percentage of free school meals increases." This suggests that pupils from disadvantaged areas may benefit the most from the introduction of this Bill. It is also possible that having the experience of outdoor education may influence pupils' course decisions which leads them towards higher education as a destination. This is highlighted in SAPOE's Outdoor Education Centres Fit for the Future.

The UCAS personal statement is one part of the information submitted in support of an application to university. It provides an opportunity to highlight relevant experience and motivation amongst other things. There is some evidence (including that from Sutton Trust in 2012) that the "personal statement further disadvantages students from low- and middle-income backgrounds" because such applicants don't have the social capital to access "high status" experiences in support of their application. Experience of residential outdoor education, on a more equitable basis as intended through the Bill, would give an applicant an opportunity to demonstrate a means through which they have developed qualities such as leadership, team work, good communication, resilience, reflection; which are all sought after by universities. Whilst universities certainly have other means to identify and support applications from underrepresented groups and institutions will seek to identify an applicant's potential rather than simply reward pre-existing advantage in making offers, doing more within the school system to level the playing field between socio-economic groups of pupils could be helpful.

**Q1.** Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

We have repeatedly called for a more holistic approach to widening access to university, doing more at a Scotland-level to join-up action taken in school and college to this agenda. We consider the proposed Bill as helping to deliver in this space.

Building learner confidence as part of a long-term recovery from the pandemic

The legacy of the pandemic and repeated disruption to young people's learning is likely to last for years, with negative consequences on attainment and learner confidence. We see potential, if opportunities for outdoor residential education are increased, to rebuild learner confidence amongst school pupils and would hope this supports attainment and progression onto university and other positive destinations.

Whilst we do not have data specific to the pandemic's negative effect on learner confidence and mental health in schools, we do have this evidence for university students during this time. A poll of university students in Scotland in 2021 found that 88% of students were worried about missing out on social experiences with their peers. More than half, 58%, felt less confident as a result of the pandemic and 74% of students felt less engaged in their learning. The consultation document on residential education points out that these metrics can be improved by outdoor residential education.

**Q2.** Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Universities Scotland does not have a view on this.

**Q3.** The proposed Bill will cover residential outdoor education provision for local authority and grant-aided schools only. Which of the following best expresses your view that independent schools or any other education establishments should not be covered by this obligation.

Neutral (neither support nor oppose)

**Please give reasons for your response.**

Universities Scotland does not have a view on this.

**Q4.** The intention is that the obligation to ensure that residential outdoor education is provided would fall on those who are responsible for arranging the provision, e.g. education authorities and managers of grant-aided schools. Which of the following best expresses your view of this proposal?

Neutral (neither support nor oppose)

**Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Universities Scotland does not have a view on this.

## Funding

Q5. Which of the following best expresses your view of how residential outdoor education experiences should be funded?

**Please explain the reasons for your response. (If you consider Scottish Government funding should be provided to local authorities, please set out the mechanism for such funding, for example through block grant, ring fenced funding etc.)**

It is not appropriate for Universities Scotland to offer an opinion on this question, however the cost implications are likely to be significant. We note that in addition to the cost of the residential experience itself, there can be wider, real and perceived financial and other obstacles to participation from the perspective of individuals and families given that the buying/hiring of clothing and footwear as appropriate for outdoor education activities can be expensive. Therefore, however the costs are met – whether by the Scottish Government, local authorities or parents/carers, it is critical that there are arrangements in place to ensure that pupils do not miss out on this opportunity because of their financial circumstances.

## Financial Implications

Q6. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

*No Response*

## Standard/ Quality of provision

Q7. Which of the following best expresses your view on the proposal for a quality framework to ensure the quality of the education provision of outdoor centres?

Neutral (neither support nor oppose)

**Please give reasons for your response, including whether this should be done by HMIE using a quality framework as part of their inspection of schools and the extent to which, if any, it should be statutory.**

Universities Scotland does not have a view on this.

Q8. Which of the following best expresses your view that the age range of 12 – 16 is appropriate for participation in the residential outdoor education experience?

Partially supportive

**Please give reasons for your response, including whether you think other age ranges would be more appropriate.**

Universities Scotland is content to defer judgement on this to others more informed about school-age education and development needs.

## Equalities

Q9. Any new law can have an impact on different individuals in society, for example as a result of their age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

What impact could this proposal have on particular people if it became law? If you do not have a view skip to next question.

Please explain the reasons for your answer and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts on particular people.

*No Response*

Q10. How might equity of provision for all be ensured, regardless of socio-economic status? Please give reasons for your response.

Whilst not able to provide a detailed answer to this question, we repeat our comments in response to question 1. We see value in making outdoor residential education more equitable and accessible to all pupils regardless of socio-economic background (and all other metrics of deprivation) and see this as potentially complementing the agenda to widen access to university.

## Sustainability

Q11. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? [If you do not have a view then skip to next question]

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

*No Response*

## General

Q12. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

*No Response*