

Global Citizenship Education in Scotland

What, Why and How

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Summary

Our world is an increasingly complex web of connections and interdependencies as we face unprecedented global challenges: the climate emergency, the lingering impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the continuing legacy of colonialism and other long-standing inequalities, both within Scottish communities, and within and between countries around the world. Now must be the time for education that is transformative, that equips all learners with the knowledge, skills and values needed to build a fairer, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable world for everyone.

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is a type of transformative education that aims to shift individual perspectives and influence collective action and behaviours, encouraging us all to think critically about what is equitable and just for people, and what will minimise harm to our planet. Since 2013, GCE has been embedded across the experiences and outcomes of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). All learners in Scottish schools are entitled to [Learning for Sustainability \(LfS\)](#), an overarching term that encompasses GCE, Sustainable Development Education and Outdoor Learning.

The International Development Education Association of Scotland (IDEAS) is a diverse network of organisations and individuals that exists to support all learners in Scotland to become critically engaged global citizens. We believe that a well-resourced and networked GCE sector can support teachers, educators and policy makers to deliver the best possible GCE in our schools and beyond, growing globally minded, informed and active citizens and communities.

We value the Scottish Government’s commitment to GCE within formal education, as well as the [steps being taken to support an Anti-Racist curriculum](#) and [incorporate children’s rights into Scots law](#). We welcome the launch of the strengthened [Lfs Action Plan \(Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity\)](#). It is clear that bold ambition and action are needed to ensure all learners receive their entitlement to Lfs.

In order for the Target 2030 vision to be successfully achieved we are calling for the Scottish Government to:

Recommendation 1: Amplify the value of GCE in achieving the Target 2030 vision

Recommendation 2: Increase resources to engage more educators with professional learning for GCE

Recommendation 3: Improve the synergy between Lfs and Anti-Racism in Education

Recommendation 4: Use GCE to enhance policy coherence across different Scottish Government portfolios

Acronyms

| | |
|---------|---|
| ANGEL | Academic Network on Global Education and Learning |
| AREP | Anti Racism in Education Programme |
| CfE | Curriculum for Excellence |
| CLPL | Career Long Professional Learning |
| DEC | Development Education Centre |
| GCE | Global Citizenship Education |
| GTCS | General Teaching Council for Scotland |
| Lfs | Learning for Sustainability |
| NPF | National Performance Framework |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TEESNet | Teacher Education For Equity and Sustainability Network |
| UNICEF | United Nation’s Children Fund |

What is Global Citizenship?

Global Citizenship describes a sense of belonging to a larger global community, a recognition that every person is a citizen of the world and that we all have responsibilities to each other and to our planet. It involves understanding and appreciating diverse cultures, perspectives, and ways of life, as well as recognizing and addressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality and armed conflict. A global citizen strives to be informed and engaged in both local and global issues, collaborating with others to promote a kinder, fairer and more sustainable world for all.

What is Global Citizenship Education (GCE)?

There is not, and likely should not be, a single [definition of GCE](#). By its very nature, there are differing perspectives, approaches and outcomes. It also needs to continually evolve in response to ever-changing local, national and global contexts.

However, at its heart, GCE aims to give everyone the knowledge, skills and values they need to be responsible and active global citizens. Its purpose is to support all learners to participate fully in an interdependent, complex and unpredictable world and play a key role in creating a more just, secure and sustainable future.

Crucially, GCE needs to be a lifelong and life-wide process. While it is often defined within and limited to schools, it is also essential in adult and community learning. [What it means to be a global citizen in Scotland](#) has far reaching implications for many sectors, from the NHS to the police and more.

Why is GCE needed more than ever?

The world faces a dramatic, dangerous and destructive set of simultaneous crises. The [climate crisis](#) is worsening. [Extreme poverty](#) is rising for the first time in two decades. [Humanitarian need](#) is growing. [Conflict and violence](#) are increasing. [Inequality](#) is widening.

The interdependent nature of our world and the problems it faces are not well understood with populist and divisive politics and media fuelling misinformation, all of which can damage trust and drive wedges between and within families, communities and countries.

Scotland was one of the first countries in the world to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of its [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#). GCE is at the core of [SDG Target 4.7](#). It plays an important role in delivery across all of the global goals and is essential for achieving the vision and priorities of [Scotland's International Development Strategy](#). GCE is also at the heart of the vision and commitments of the recently adopted [European Declaration on Global Education to 2050](#).

The need to “educate all learners in Scotland for an uncertain and unpredictable future” was a key finding of the recent [National Discussion on Education in Scotland](#). These conversations also

highlighted the value of a broad-based, community-wide and inclusive education that supports all learners to develop both as individuals, and citizens of Scotland and the wider world. These findings are aligned with those of the [Muir Review](#) which identified issues such as climate change, children's rights and social justice as being key drivers for education. [Research conducted by the Children's Parliament](#) recognised the importance to children of developing agency and learning about concepts such as equity, fairness and climate justice.

This is why GCE has never been more important.

Good GCE can:

- equip people with the knowledge and skills needed to counter misinformation
- promote and value diverse voices and perspectives
- develop better understanding of the historic injustices that have shaped our societies and the challenges we now face
- build awareness, understanding and critical engagement with local and global issues
- strengthen connections between learning in the classroom and real-life contexts and experiences
- encourage creative and critical thinking and improve communication skills
- inspire hope and motivate people to take action, both individually and collectively, to deliver solutions for our planet and its people.

What does good GCE in Scotland look like?

As a network, we believe that the aims and values of GCE are relevant beyond the education sphere, cutting across wider society and providing an inclusive and reflective lens through which to engage with sustainable development.

Good GCE in Scotland is:

- lifelong and life-wide
- approached through a critical lens, informed by decolonial and Anti-Racist practice
- interdisciplinary and takes a multifaceted approach
- learner-centred and transformative
- embedded across whole education establishments and communities
- constantly evolving in response to changing local, national and global contexts.

What does this mean in practice?

IDEAS members support Scottish teachers through [good quality GCE resource creation and development](#) which refocus issues through a social justice lens¹. We are also responsive to need, for example by [enabling teachers to teach about urgent topical issues](#) or more easily locate resources linked to specific themes or curricular areas. We produce a [quarterly magazine](#) which provides advice and inspiration for teachers looking to explore local and global issues in the classroom².

Our members include the regionally based [Development Education Centres \(DECs\)](#), which together span the geographical regions of all 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The DECs offer high quality and General Teacher Council for Scotland (GTCS) accredited Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities and innovative learning and teaching projects. They support educators at all levels in incorporating global citizenship in the classroom, and across whole schools and learning communities.

The IDEAS website has a [diverse collection of inspiring examples illustrating what GCE looks like in Scotland](#).

What are we asking the Scottish Government to do?

Recommendation 1: Amplify the value of GCE in achieving the Target 2030 vision

Scotland's [LFS Action Plan \(Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity\)](#) aims to build an inspiring movement for change so that all learners receive their entitlement to LfS. We welcome the inclusion of an IDEAS member in the LfS Leadership Group to support the development, delivery and implementation of the LfS Action Plan. As one of the key strands of LfS, GCE will play a crucial role in achieving the Target 2030 vision.

- We recommend that emerging and existing LfS networks for children and young people include dedicated spaces for them to connect and share their experiences of GCE. It is important that these networks build on the success of national programmes such as UNICEF UK's [Rights Respecting Schools Award](#)³, campaigns such as [Teach the Future](#), as well as the regional school and youth networks supported through the work of IDEAS members and other organisations.
- We recommend that effective use is made of the research into and evidence of good practice in GCE to inform LfS policy and planning. The DECs have a long history of working with others to help support the delivery of good GCE and can play an important role in further developing this body of evidence. IDEAS members can also offer expertise and practical support through their involvement in wider European networks such as [Bridge 47](#), the [Teacher Education for Equity and](#)

¹ 22,304 hits to Signposts website in the 22/23 financial year, a 39% increase on the previous year

² c.8000 subscribers to Stride magazine

³ 57% of Scottish schools are currently engaged with the Rights Respecting Schools Award programme

[Sustainability Network \(TEESNet\)](#) and the [Academic Network on Global Education and Learning \(ANGEL\)](#).

- We recommend that the development of the LfS portal makes effective use of the extensive content available through IDEAS members, in particular the resources disseminated via the [Signposts website](#). Curated by IDEAS members, this platform provides a range of practical, relevant and inspiring resources to support practitioners at every level to embed global citizenship within their learning community.

Recommendation 2: Increase resources to engage more educators with professional learning for GCE

LfS is one of the core priorities of the [GTCS Professional Standards for Teachers](#) and one of the Target 2030 goals is that every practitioner, school and education leader should demonstrate LfS in their practice. The [National Discussion on Education in Scotland](#) identified the need for high quality professional learning opportunities at all levels of the education system. Teachers and educators need to be given the time, space and resource to develop their knowledge and expertise, reflect on their learning, plan next steps and take subsequent action.

Scotland's DEC's have a track record in offering high quality and accredited professional learning to help develop practitioners' knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence in delivering GCE and embedding it across education settings. Collectively, the five DEC's have had teacher engagement across all of Scotland's 32 local authorities, with live professional learning opportunities (both online and in-person) reaching an estimated 10% of Scotland's teachers⁴. These are impressive levels of engagement and demonstrate what potentially could be achieved with increased resources and support for the delivery of professional learning programmes for GCE. Additional resourcing would enable a greater reach across Scotland and strengthen whole-school and teacher-led approaches to LfS. Support could also be provided for educators to deepen their practice through the provision of deeper dive programmes (accredited training for this is available through the DEC's but is not currently delivered owing to a lack of funding).

Recommendation 3: Improve the synergy between LfS and Anti-Racism in Education

Strengthening LfS and advancing the [Anti-Racism in Education Programme \(AREP\)](#) in Scotland's schools are identified as critical, but separate actions in the [Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2023-2024](#). This separation clearly highlights the need for improved linkages between LfS and ARE, both within the Scottish Government and across the different partners involved in developing and delivering these programmes in Scotland's schools.

Improving synergy between LfS and Anti-Racism in Education would achieve multiple benefits. For example, ARE plays an important role in ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to learn about the importance of climate justice. LfS can support the embedding of Anti-Racist principles in initial and ongoing professional development for teachers and educators. Good GCE is informed by

⁴ 5,624 teachers participated in live professional learning opportunities (online and in-person) offered by the DEC's in the 22/23 financial year

decolonial and Anti-Racist practice and provides a way to bring together LfS and Anti-Racism in Education more coherently and effectively.

Action should be taken to ensure a diverse membership of the LfS Leadership Group that is inclusive of all voices. We also recommend that Scotland's [Anti-Racist Curriculum Principles](#) are used to inform the development and delivery of the LfS action plan.

Recommendation 4: Use GCE to enhance policy coherence across different Scottish Government portfolios

The [Scottish Government's commitment to good Global Citizenship](#) is evident across multiple portfolios including Education and Skills; NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care; Social Justice; Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition; and Constitution, External Affairs and Culture. Being a "good global citizen" is a core aim of [Scotland's Global Affairs framework](#). The importance of Global Citizenship in different Scottish Government policies and programmes highlights the value of GCE as a lifelong and life-wide process of relevance across many aspects of our lives and communities.

Good quality GCE can support the Scottish Government's stated aims in regards to [strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development](#). GCE helps to deepen understanding of the ways in which the different dimensions of sustainable development are interconnected, supporting policymakers to take more holistic, joined-up and coherent approaches. Recommended actions include embedding GCE in professional learning programmes within Scottish Government and making better use of the [toolkit for policymakers](#) developed by Scottish Government in partnership with IDEAS members and SDG Network Scotland.

Who are IDEAS?

IDEAS is a [diverse network of organisations and individuals](#) that exists to ensure all learners in Scotland become critically engaged global citizens with the knowledge, skills and values to play their part in tackling the root causes of the world's increasingly urgent and complex problems.

Our aim is for all learners to have the support they need to question the assumptions that underlie the status quo, develop the skills and agency to reform traditional power structures to drive global justice and, in solidarity, create a more peaceful, sustainable, fairer world for all.

The IDEAS network supports constructive new relationships, shares knowledge and learning, amplifies the value of good GCE in Scotland, and advocates for improved GCE by promoting excellence in practice and policy development in support of wider Scottish Government global citizenship objectives.

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