
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

Alastair McAlpine
Chief Statistician
Scottish Government
(by email)

30 September 2026

Dear Alastair,

Confirmation of accreditation for Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels statistics

We have reviewed the actions that the Scottish Government has taken to address the four requirements set out in our [assessment](#) of the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) statistics. I am pleased to confirm that these statistics comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). This letter confirms that they should be labelled as 'accredited official statistics'. Please see the annex below supporting our judgement in detail.

We welcome the steps you have taken to strengthen the quality and value of these statistics. The expanded quality information gives users a comprehensive overview. Making the data available through Administrative Data Research (ADR) Scotland supports reuse of the data, while the additional analyses of ACEL data provide new insights.

It is good to see the recent proactive engagement with users outside the education sector, including academics. To make the most of this engagement, we expect you to maintain contact with academic users, explore further opportunities for engagement, and seek their input on any future developments to the ACEL statistics.

I am grateful for the constructive engagement from you and your team throughout the assessment.

I am copying this letter to Gita Anand, Deputy Director, Education Analytical Services; Richard Morrison, Head of Learning Analysis Unit, Education Analytical Services; and Paul Matthews, Head of Profession for Statistics.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed Humpherson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ed" being more distinct than the last name "Humpherson".

Ed Humpherson
Director General for OSR

Annex: Review of actions in response to OSR's assessment: Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels (ACEL) statistics

Requirement 1: In order to strengthen the credibility of the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels statistics, the Scottish Government should provide users with a greater level of detail on the quality assurance processes that are undertaken at each stage of data collection and processing. This includes providing detailed information on the quality checks undertaken by local authorities (LAs) and by the Scottish Government and how this quality information is used to improve the statistics.

Actions taken by the Scottish Government: Further detail on quality assurance (QA) processes was added to the [2022-23 publication](#), including information on:

- the systems used for the data collection
- QA stages
- standards for assessing against the curriculum
- the national programme of QA and moderation

The [methodology report](#) for the 2023-24 statistics built on this by providing information on:

- LAs' quality assurance activities, including some quantification measures
- the role of Quality Assurance and Moderation colleagues (QAMSOs) and how they support teachers to moderate work against CfE levels

OSR's judgement: We consider this requirement to be met.

Since our assessment, the Scottish Government has significantly expanded its quality information. It now gives users a comprehensive overview of the quality of the statistics and the sources of uncertainty in the data. In particular, the information on LAs' quality assurance arrangements has strengthened the credibility of the statistics.

The Scottish Government explains how data are quality assured at each stage of the data collection, including how QAMSOs help teachers moderate assessments against the CfE and how the data are checked again when they are sent to the Scottish Government.

Requirement 2: The Scottish Government should identify and proactively engage with users outside of the education sector, with a primary focus on academia, to raise awareness of the statistics, increase the credibility of the statistics, and publicly seek the input of users on potential developments.

Actions taken by the Scottish Government: The Scottish Government has raised awareness of the ACEL data by:

- presenting at a meeting of the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA)

- discussing the Curriculum Improvement Cycle on Maths and Numeracy focus at a National Advisory Group meeting

The Scottish Government ran a stakeholder survey in August 2026 to seek views on the ACEL collection and give users an opportunity to offer feedback on suggestions for further analyses. This was shared with academics in the education field. One of the questions asked whether there is demand among academic users to run a seminar about ACEL data.

More broadly, Scottish Government education statisticians have been engaging with the Centre for Teaching at the University of Glasgow. At a recent workshop, the head of the Scottish Government unit gave an overview of its statistical and research outputs, which has led to several follow-up conversations with academics and a potential collaboration.

The Scottish Government runs a monthly academic seminar series for colleagues across the Education Directorate as well as stakeholders in Education Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland.

ACEL data are now available via the ADR Scotland platform.

OSR's judgement: We consider this requirement to be met.

The presentations and stakeholder survey are good examples of proactive user engagement, and the survey targeted academic users. We expect the Scottish Government to maintain contact with these academic users, explore further opportunities for engagement, and seek their input on any future developments to the ACEL statistics.

The wider divisional activities demonstrate the Scottish Government's commitment to academic engagement more broadly.

Access to ACEL data via the ADR platform simplifies the process for academics seeking to link ACEL data.

Requirement 3: The Scottish Government should explore and, where possible, produce new analysis to provide additional insights into the data, for example a cohort-based series. In addition, the Scottish Government should maximise the value of the dashboards through identifying user needs, promoting the dashboards to wider users, and implementing improvements where needed.

Actions taken by the Scottish Government: The Scottish Government included some text in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 publications asking users for feedback on additional analyses of ACEL data. It has also received ideas and requests for additional analyses from other sources, including the school statistics mailbox and discussions with policymakers or academics. As described above, the team ran a stakeholder survey to generate further ideas.

Additional analyses which have been carried out so far include:

- Ad hoc analysis for a user of ACEL data by deprivation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), sex and ethnicity
- Ad hoc analysis for a user of P1 pupils' ACEL levels by various protected characteristics, including some bivariate analyses such as sex and deprivation, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and deprivation, and ethnicity and sex
- ACEL results of looked after children. This analysis was [published](#) in July 2026
- Analysis of cohorts of pupils by ACEL levels and correlations with attendance data, by Education Scotland colleagues

The National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report (NIFIER) [dashboard](#), which sets out the evidence to track progress towards the strategic education outcomes in the National Improvement Framework (NIF), was reviewed and updated in 2025. This included a new breakdown of ACEL data by ASN to meet an identified user need (improved visibility of ASN-related inequalities in education). The review led to improvements in dashboard functionality and presentation of data, and Google Analytics is now used to monitor use of the dashboard.

Due to a change in priorities, the review of the school information dashboards has been delayed until 2027. Whether it is resourced will depend on the outcome of a division-wide prioritisation exercise. The Scottish Government said that the review would apply the lessons learned from the NIFIER review to maximise the value of dashboards.

OSR's judgement: We consider this requirement to be met.

The Scottish Government is responding to user need for additional analysis by providing bespoke breakdowns of the data. We welcome that it has published the analysis of ACEL results of looked after children.

To maximise the insight of secondary analyses for all users, the Scottish Government should consider publishing any relevant analysis which is provided directly to users.

It is good to see the additional breakdowns of ACEL data in the NIFIER dashboard. If the review of the school information dashboards is prioritised, the Scottish Government should alert users about its development plans and seek user input to ensure the dashboards meet their needs.

Requirement 4: The Scottish Government should promote the reuse of the statistics, for example, making them available through a secure platform allowing for data linkage and external research.

Actions taken by the Scottish Government: ACEL data are now available on ADR Scotland, a secure data platform. Users must complete security checks before they can access the data. ADR Scotland also maintains a metadata catalogue, which helps users find relevant data more easily.

OSR's judgement: We consider this requirement to be met.

Making the data available on the ADR Scotland platform promotes reuse and maximises the value of the data.