



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Scotland

Housing Education in Scotland



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Overview

As the body for professional standards, the Chartered Institute of Housing seeks to equip housing practitioners so they have the right knowledge, skills, behaviours and values for their job.

The CIH member code of conduct sets clear expectations on our members to reflect and update the knowledge and skills they need to deliver excellent services.

However, professionalism does not exist in isolation. It is informed by the practice, the training, and learning that housing practitioners demonstrate day in, day out as well as the political, regulatory and commercial environment. It is informed by high quality housing education.

There is a vibrant landscape of housing education in Scotland. However, it is vital that we build on these strengths and consider how to create a more collaborative and cohesive housing education sector in Scotland to meet the emerging demands of the profession and education providers.

This report sets out the practical steps required by CIH, learning centres, employers and the Scottish Government to enhance access to housing education in Scotland, create further alignment between the partners and to improve access to housing education across the country.

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Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for CIH

- Work with all educational institutions to capture common data sets on learner journeys into housing education.
- Creation of a review group with all relevant educational institutions in Scotland on emerging priorities for housing education.
- Produce content matching different qualifications required for roles within the housing sector at all career stages.
- Host webpage with information on all current housing qualifications available in Scotland.
- Make the case for housing education.
- The creation of an Investors in People style award to recognise those employers that invest in housing education.

Recommendations for education providers

- Improve collaboration across the sector, especially between further and higher education institutions.
- Share relevant learner journey data from each institution with CIH
- Actively promote housing qualifications to local employers.
- Work with CIH to develop new qualifications and content if and where there is market interest
- Play an active role in the housing education review group

For employers

- Work with CIH to match qualifications to job roles.
- Help develop a business case for housing education.
- Include housing education as a desirable criteria or equivalent for all housing roles
- To apply for CIH investors in people style award where appropriate.

Recommendations for the Scottish Government

- Review the impact of the mandatory qualification for relevant letting agency staff
- Ensure the national careers service communicates the opportunities available in the housing sector
- Make the case for all housing staff by to be professionally qualified

Introduction

Access to high quality housing education and content that meets practitioners needs, and the needs of the sector, is key to meeting the future demands of the profession. We believe that housing education is essential to both professionalising the sector and building a resilient housing workforce for the future. And given the current context of responding to COVID-19, future proofing the skills and behaviours of the profession has never been timelier.

This report explores how CIH can work with employers, education providers and others to strengthen the provision of housing education within Scotland. It has been informed by the findings from a housing education roundtable held in August 2019, qualitative interviews with key housing stakeholders and supported with desktop research. The aim of this work is to expand access to housing education in Scotland and aid the professionalisation of the housing sector. The conclusion and recommendations detailed in the report, which was written before the COVID-19 pandemic, are those of CIH and not of anyone that has contributed to its development.



Current provision of housing education across Scotland

At present there are a range of institutions across Scotland that offer in person educational courses for housing professionals at a variety of levels (see table 1 below).

Table 1: qualifications offered by institution

Institution	Qualifications offered
Ayrshire College	CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing
Dundee and Angus College	CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing
City of Glasgow College	CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing
New Lanarkshire College	CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing
SHARE	CIH SCQF Level 5 Certificate in Housing Practice (CIH Level 2) CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 3 in Housing Maintenance and Asset Management CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing Practice CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing Practice
University of Glasgow	Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Housing Studies
University of Stirling	Postgraduate Certificate Postgraduate Diploma/MSc in Housing Studies

All qualifications can also be studied online and onsite with the CIH Housing Academy. While traditionally there are elements of some courses provided online, education providers have moved their course content online in response to the COVID-19 lockdown.

CIH and Landlord Accreditation Scotland also provide a professional development programme called LETWELL for Scottish letting professionals. This was developed in response to the Scottish Government's regulation of letting agents and associated qualification requirements for specific staff within agencies. On completion, learners are awarded a CIH Level 3 Certificate in Letting and Managing Residential Property.

Table 1 details the offering of face to face housing education across the country. All the non-higher education providers offer CIH Level 4 Certificate and all but one offers the Level 5 Diploma. There is less availability for those studying Level 2 and 3 qualifications. The only on site learning centres to offer the CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice are SHARE and Dundee and Angus College.



Table 2: qualification uptake, per year, per award

Qualification Title	01/09/18 to 31/08/19	01/09/17 to 31/08/18	01/09/16 to 31/08/17
CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice	12	45	12
CIH Level 3 Award in Housing Practice (QCF)	0	1	0
CIH Level 3 Diploma in Housing Practice (QCF)	0	12	0
CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice (QCF)	23	58	52
CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing Maintenance	0	0	9
CIH Level 4 Diploma in Housing Practice (QCF)	19	45	63
CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing	36	10	0
CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing	98	47	26
CIH Level 3 Certificate in Letting and Managing Residential Property	95	399	200
CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice	10	0	0
CIH Award in Community Action in Housing at SCQF Level 5	0	14	0
CIH Certificate in Housing Practice at SCQF Level 5	45	30	47
Total	338	661	409

Table 2 highlights the qualification awards made over the last three years in Scotland. It makes clear that there has been an increase in learners studying Level 4 and 5 qualifications over recent years, whereas there has been a corresponding decrease in the those studying Level 2 and 3 qualifications.

Aims and methodology

Given the limited information around housing education offered in Scotland, this project set out to gather the views of stakeholders on the types of education currently offered and what the future of housing education should look like.

In August 2019 we held a roundtable with 15 housing leaders in Scotland to discuss the future of housing education. The agenda for this discussion has been included as Appendix 1. A summary of the discussion is noted below and has been used to inform this report.

In addition, between November 2019 and February 2020, we conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with a range of housing professionals across Scotland. We interviewed people from a variety of housing backgrounds, including housing education providers, local authority employees and housing association employees. The aim was to capture the views of a cross-section of the housing sector on Scottish housing education. See Appendix 1 for the interview script.

Conclusions from the August 2019 roundtable

This is a write up of main points of discussion at the roundtable on housing education held on 15 August 2019 at the Centre for Collaborative Housing Evidence (CaCHE) office in Bridgeton, Glasgow. Following an introduction from CIH and CaCHE the following conclusions were drawn:

- Lack of formal requirement for housing education has undermined its development, with employers seldom asking for qualifications as part of the recruitment process.
- Both employers and the Scottish Housing Regulator need to be supportive of education for it to have sector relevance.
- The focus should be on supporting people to develop themselves. Despite a shared commitment to professionalise the sector, it would be counterproductive to take steps that stop entry to the sector.
- There are potential gaps in the housing education offer in Scotland. This includes further qualifications for those that work in the private rented sector (PRS) and for those that have achieved their post graduate diploma and/or are existing senior leaders in the sector.
- It is noted there is no undergraduate housing studies course in Scotland.
- While recognising the commercial tensions, there would be value in stronger link between colleges and universities to better support learners studying across institutions.
- Housing must be recognised as a profession and education is the means to achieve this. However, Scotland is well served by support from employers to achieve this outcome.

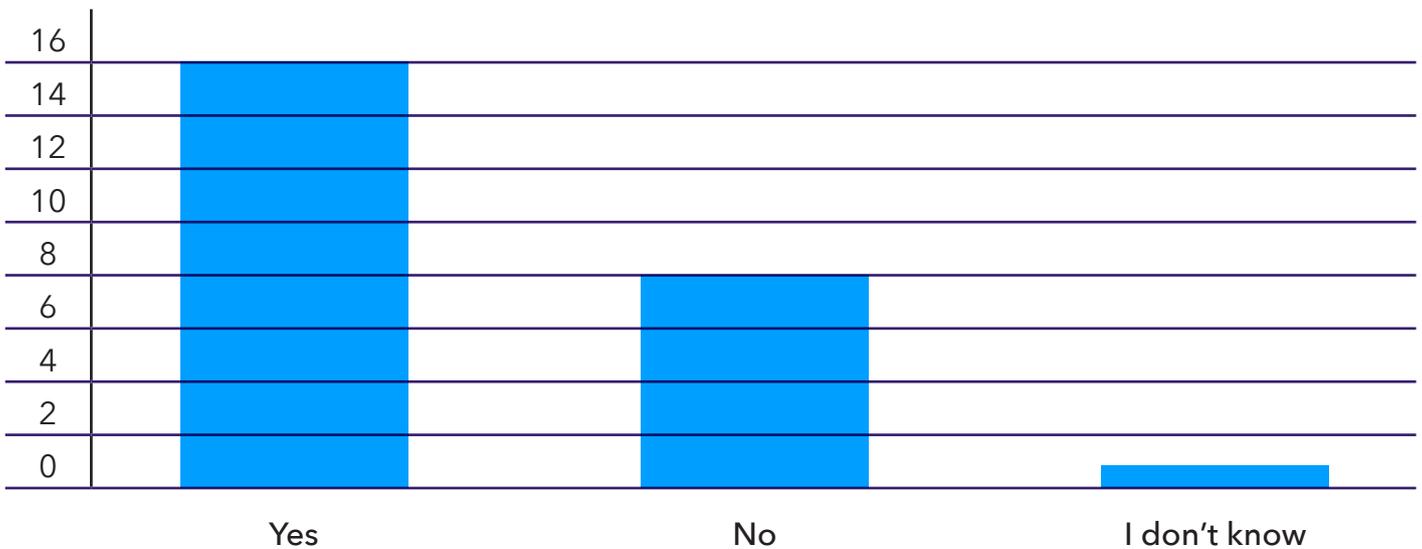
Key findings from interviews

Qualifications referred to during recruitment and promotion

Figure 1 shows that approximately two-thirds of the interview participants stated that their employers referred to CIH qualifications at the recruitment stage.

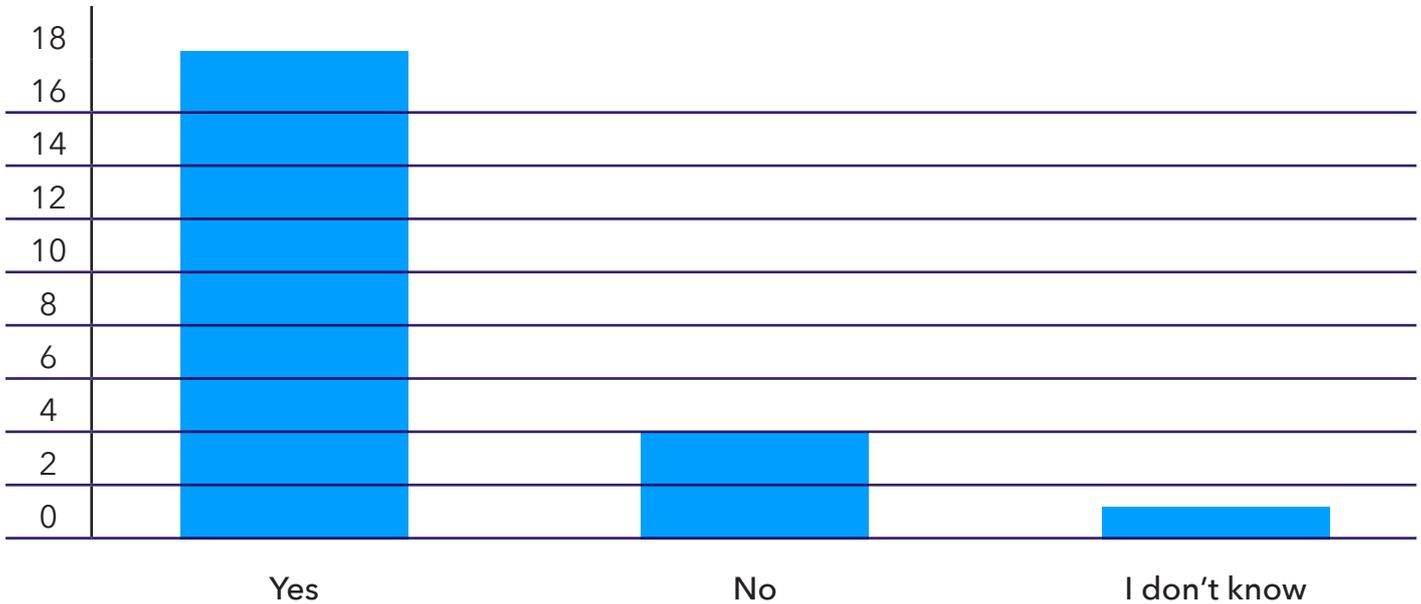
The responses in the interviews noted that whether an employer would specify the need for a CIH qualification was often dependent on the role the person was applying for and if housing knowledge was a key requirement. Participants also explained that CIH qualifications generally were a desirable criterion rather than essential – although some landlords did include a qualification as essential criteria. This categorisation was typically in place for senior housing posts.

Figure 1: do participants’ organisations refer to a CIH qualification during the recruitment process



Regarding a requirement for CIH qualifications during a promotion process, the results become less clear. 12 interview participants said their organisation would refer to CIH qualifications during this process, yet eight interview participants said their organisation would not.

Figure 2: do participants' organisations provide funding for housing education



Most interview participants (17) reported their organisation as funding housing education undertaken by employees.

In general, interview participants mentioned that those wanting to undertake housing education would apply for funding from their employer and, depending on the budget and amount requested, they would be able to undertake a course. The majority of the interview participants' organisations had the resources to provide access to education.



Value of housing education

All those interviewed highly valued housing education and considered it crucial to the professionalisation of housing. Some also mentioned housing education as an investment in their staff. This investment was seen to benefit the staff member and the organisation which was then able to use the knowledge the staff member gained. It was also felt to benefit the wider housing sector, as if the staff member left the organisation, they could then disseminate their skills to other organisations.

It was also noted by some that offering housing qualifications made employers more attractive to potential applicants, as they could provide work experience along with a recognised qualification. Housing education was felt to encourage best practice within the sector and provide those who work in the sector with skills and behaviours to develop their future career.

Topic areas, skills and knowledge that should be prioritised in housing education

The interviews contained two questions about which topics, skills and knowledge should be prioritised in housing education.

It was noted that there needs to be a balance between technical knowledge, e.g. housing knowledge, and general competencies, e.g. interpersonal skills, and that the types of knowledge and skills that people need will vary depending on their role.

The following areas and skills are those which featured prominently in participants' accounts as needing to be prioritised within housing education:

- **Digitisation** - Organisations need to learn about technology and how to utilise it within the housing sector. This includes working with data and how to collect it, use it and manage it. It was acknowledged that the sector is becoming more digitised and that housing education should prepare people for this.
- **Specificity and focus** - Reflecting the diversity of the sector, it was suggested there is a need for more challenging qualifications for those working in the PRS, as well as ensuring topics such as ageing, climate change, human rights, housing rights, factoring, asset management, and homelessness are considered in course content.

- **Interpersonal skills and joined up working** - This is in relation to dealing with customers and clients in a variety of circumstances, e.g. when a customer is in distress, but also in working with other agencies or staff members.
- **Leadership** - While relating to interpersonal skills, some participants noted the need for more training in managing people, it was also asked what CIH could do to give senior leaders in the sector more support in their roles. It was felt that housing education needs to support practitioners in the sector at all levels, including management and leadership and aid succession planning.
- **Future** - Similar to the theme of digitisation, it was also mentioned that housing education should prepare the workforce for future trends, not just on the present issues.

It was also mentioned that having a platform for practitioners to access further training, modules and information about the housing sector after completing their qualifications would be useful.

Other notable comments from the interviews included:

- Housing education must be accessible to people with a variety of learning needs. The sector has little understanding of the learner journey and reasons why people do and do not study housing qualifications.
- There is a lack of understanding about benchmarking and quality assurance from educational institutions so that students aren't awarded artificially high grades.
- There needs to be more awareness about housing education at all levels of profession and the benefits that a qualification can add to an individual's career.



Conclusions

Examining the feedback from the interviews, the data on housing education availability and CIH Scotland's own research, our conclusions regarding housing education are set out below.

1. The value of housing education.

Data from CIH highlights there has been strong interest in some housing qualifications in recent years, although the uptake has not equal across all levels.

Nonetheless, those who took part in interviews and in the roundtable spoke about the value they place on housing education, the importance of CIH making a case for professionalism in the housing sector and the role of education in supporting this.

It was considered that CIH can and should be bolder and work with employers to make the case for qualifications - so they can see the value and benefit to them and their employees - and to publicly recognise those employers that do invest in housing education.

2. Awareness of content and standards

Feedback in the interviews and roundtable highlighted areas where there could be improvements to the quality of housing education. This ranged from course availability, new content and delivery mechanisms to ensuring quality of qualifications achieved.

Yet existing CIH qualifications include much of what was asked for by respondents, including content on customer services, homelessness, supporting older tenants, wider access through online courses and having quality assurance benchmarking in place across the institutions it works with.

However, it is evident from the feedback that CIH could do more to communicate clearly what courses are available, what they include and what steps are taken to ensure high standards of all housing qualifications. This would help ensure sector understanding of housing education is representative of the services offered today.

3. Course content

A review of qualifications and feedback from respondents highlights that new housing education content could enhance the delivery of services for customers and tenants.

This includes progressive qualifications for those working in the PRS and content on alternative funding models, digitisation and regulatory compliance. It is also considered there could be an opportunity to improve content for senior leaders and consider an undergraduate qualification on housing.

However, it is also noted that housing education is a commercial market and it is vital that CIH works with institutions and employers to develop and grow the market, rather than be prescriptive about courses and content. There is a need for stronger partnership working between CIH, institutions and landlords, letting agents and non-stock holding authorities to consider new and emerging markets for housing qualifications. This is particularly true as education providers respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Changing the market

The introduction of mandatory qualifications for letting agency staff has changed the market for housing education in Scotland. Instead of being considered as good practice, there is now a requirement for all relevant staff working in a letting agency to be appropriately qualified up to at least SCQF Level 6 (equivalent to CIH Level 3).

But in seeking to change and grow the market across the whole sector, it is vital that CIH and other organisations do not inadvertently limit people's access to employment in the sector with early calls for mandatory qualifications. Instead CIH need to make the case about the value and benefit of qualifications in improving services before considering the case for more prescriptive requirements.

A review of the Letting Agent Code of Practice and qualification requirements and the impact on improving standards should be conducted. This would inform and complement the business case for housing qualifications.

At the same time there is role for CIH working with the Scottish Government and its agencies to grow the market for housing education and work with schools and careers agencies to communicate the value of a career in housing and the contribution that housing education can make towards career progression.

5. The learner journey

While individual learning centres do collect learner data there is no national, consistent dataset on the background of those learners studying housing qualification in Scotland. It is considered that steps to improve housing education should attempt to address data gaps in learners location and any equality and diversity imbalance so that students, and in turn, housing professionals better reflect the population.

Universities and colleges already independently conduct teaching evaluation surveys as part of their wider quality assurance processes- although they report response rates are low and correspondingly there is the risk of bias in these surveys against female and BME staff.

While recognising legal and practical limits on institutions to obtain and share learner data, there is a value in CIH taking a coordinating role in publishing credible findings on national learner journeys for housing qualifications so that the sector can identify and address any equality or diversity concerns.

6. Collaboration

CIH is both a professional body and an education provider and as such can play a key role coordinating institutional collaboration on housing education. CIH work with learning centres operating in the same region of Scotland so they can deliver complementary courses and qualifications for learners and improve the articulation process that exists between further education and higher education. This should include marketing and promotion of housing education as well as hosting partnerships and networks among providers who are often grappling with similar challenges in different institutional contexts.

7. Course access and location

The diversity in terms of location of study and level of qualification currently on offer is welcome. This variety helps meet student/employer needs and it is noted that many educational providers have moved from a traditional face to face on campus education provision to a blended learning model in response to student and employer needs. Indeed, it is considered that in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic there is likely to be greater interest in blended or exclusively online learning and that housing education in Scotland is well placed to respond the demands of the sector given the existing infrastructure in place. Although it is noted that accessibility and equality concerns must be considered by any organisation delivering learning online.

Recommendations

Reflecting on the conclusions above, the following recommendations have been suggested for educational institutions, employers, CIH and the Scottish Government as the main agencies that will inform the future of housing education in Scotland.

Recommendations for CIH

1. Work with all educational institutions to understand what information they already capture on learner journeys and reach agreement on what findings can be shared with CIH. This will allow CIH to understand national pathways into and through housing education. Findings should be published, if possible, and be used to inform CIH marketing and promotion plans so that the sector attracts high quality candidates, with a consideration to diversity and equality.
2. Creation of a housing education review group that conducts a six-monthly review with all educational institutions in Scotland on emerging priorities for housing education. Use this review to ensure CIH takes a more active role marketing housing qualifications and works with the profession to test appetite for new qualifications and content. This may include partnership and collaboration on qualifications with non-housing providers.
3. Produce content matching different qualifications required for roles within the housing sector at all career stages. The longer-term aim of this should be to work with the Scottish Government and the housing sector to agree an essential minimum level of housing qualification required for different roles in the sector. In the short-term, employers and practitioners should be further encouraged to invest in their own/ their employee's housing education.
4. Creation of a CIH webpage which hosts information on all current housing qualifications, explains the content of each, explains the standards set by CIH as an awarding body and how learners in Scotland can access the course that suits them.
5. Make the case for housing education. This includes working with employers to develop a business case for investing in housing education and sharing best practice from those landlords that do invest in it.
6. The creation of an Investors in People style award to recognise those employers that invest in housing education.

Recommendations for education providers

1. Collaborate with each other (especially when co-located in the same region) and CIH to ensure there is knowledge of housing education opportunities across the country. This will ensure learners can choose the course that best meets their requirements. This includes keeping the CIH education page up to date.
2. Work with CIH to share relevant learner journey data from each institution, where possible ensuring representative sampling of students.
3. Work with CIH to actively promote housing qualifications to local employers.
4. Work with CIH to develop new qualifications and content if and where there is market interest and take part in six monthly discussion on emerging priorities for housing education. This may include further collaboration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) on qualifications.
5. Play an active role in the housing education review group whereby all learning centres and education institutions are invited to participate

For employers

1. To work with CIH to match qualifications to job roles.
2. To help develop a business case for housing education.
3. Include housing education as a desirable criteria or equivalent for all housing roles with CPD offered for those with no qualification and to consider it as essential criteria for senior housing roles.
4. To apply for CIH investors in people style award where appropriate.

Recommendations for the Scottish Government

1. Review the impact of the mandatory qualification for relevant letting agency staff and the impact it made on practice in the PRS and the experience of tenants.
2. Ensure the national careers service communicates the opportunities available in the housing sector to young people leaving school, college and university.
3. Invest in and support housing education. Make the case for all housing staff by to be professionally qualified.

Appendix 1: interview schedule

1. To help us analyse the survey results please answer the following. I am responding as a:

- Local authority employee
- Housing association employee
- PRS employee
- Social tenant
- Private tenant
- Tenants representative
- Owner occupier
- Student
- Lecturer
- Other housing role (please specify)

2. The Chartered Institute of Housing offers qualifications for housing professionals at a range of different qualification levels. Did you know this?

3. As far as you know does your organisation refer to CIH qualifications at any point during your recruitment process?

4. As far as you know does the organisation you are employed with refer to CIH qualifications at any point during your promotion process?

5. As far as you know does your organisation provide funding for staff to access* housing education?

6. Does your organisation encourage staff to develop their housing education through continual professional development with CIH?

7. As far as you know does your organisation have a relationship with any of the institutions listed below with regards to housing education? (Please tick all that are applicable)

- Ayrshire College
- City of Glasgow College
- Dundee and Angus College
- New College Lanarkshire
- SHARE
- University of Glasgow
- University of Stirling
- No
- Don't know

8. Would you as an employer be interested in engaging more with housing education providers and why?
9. To what extent do you as an employer value housing education?
10. Have you or any of your team studied any CIH qualification in the last five years?
11. If you answered yes to question 10, what is your opinion of the following CIH qualifications you or someone you manage has achieved with regards to meeting the needs of your organisation/staff?

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent and 1 being very poor.

- CIH Level 2 Certificate in Housing Practice
- CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Practice (QCF)
- CIH Level 3 Certificate in Housing Maintenance And Asset Management
- CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing
- CIH Level 4 Certificate in Housing
- CIH Level 3 Certificate in Letting and Managing Residential Property part of the LETWELL Programme
- CIH Certificate in Housing Practice at SQCF Level 5
- Post Graduate Diploma in Housing Studies (University of Stirling and University of Glasgow)

12. Are there any topic areas you would like to see prioritised within housing education?
13. What skills and knowledge do you think should be prioritised within housing education?
14. What format do you prefer to undertake housing education (please tick all that apply)

- Online training
- In person training
- Webinars
- Online qualifications
- In person qualifications
- Other (please specify)

15. Is there anything else you would like to say about housing education in Scotland?



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