

INDEX OF ENCLOSURES

No.	Description	Date	Explanation of redactions	Clause
1	Email: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills	22 June 2021 11:39	Personal information	38(1)(b)
2	Email: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June	23 June 2021 11:48	Personal information	38(1)(b)
2a	Attachment: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June		Personal information Free and frank provision of advice or exchange of views Formulation or development of government policy	38(1)(b) 30(b)(ii) 29(1)(a)
3	Email: SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting	01 July 2021 09:54	Personal information	38(1)(b)

Enclosure 1 – Email: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Sent: 22 June 2021 11:39
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thanks for confirming. David will join the call at 9am Thursday. I have passed him the Teams joining link

Kind regards
[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** CabSecES@gov.scot
Sent: 22 June 2021 10:44
To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: CabSecES@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Good morning [Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Yes that would be fine for David to join the meeting as well however due to diary pressures we would be unable to move it any later on Thursday morning.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]>
Sent: 22 June 2021 09:48
To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Morning [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Fiona is due to be meeting with Ms Somerville this Thursday. She has asked that SQA Chair David Middleton joins her at the meeting too.

With apologies for asking, as I know she will be extremely busy, would Ms Somerville be available to meet any later on Thursday morning before FMQs? David has a personal commitment first thing.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent: 01 June 2021 16:06

To: CabSecES@gov.scot

Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Many thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. Confirming 24th suits Fiona. Look forward to receiving Teams link

Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** CabSecES@gov.scot

Sent: 01 June 2021 15:59

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]>; CabSecES@gov.scot

Cc: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)],

Apologies – I meant to write Thursday 24th June between 09:00 and 09:45.

If you are content with this time I will forward a Teams link.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@sqa.org.uk>

Sent: 01 June 2021 15:49

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>

Subject: RE: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Hi [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Thank you for your email. I can confirm Fiona is available for an introductory meeting with Ms Somerville. Could you please confirm if it's Tuesday 22nd or Thursday 24th? Fiona can accommodate either date from 0900-0945.

Kind regards

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** CabSecES@gov.scot
Sent: 01 June 2021 15:42
To: Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>
Cc: CabSecES@gov.scot
Subject: Introductory Meeting with Ms Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Good afternoon,

Ms Somerville would welcome a meeting with you in her role as Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

I would be grateful if you can advise on your availability for a Microsoft Teams meeting on **Tuesday 24th June between 09:00 and 09:45** as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 2 - Email: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June

From:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

@gov.scot>

Sent: 23 June 2021 11:48

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

McAllister C (Colin) <Colin.McAllister@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June

Eleanor

Please find attached an updated briefing pack for tomorrow's meeting with Fiona Robertson SQA

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Sent: 22 June 2021 11:29

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm)

<Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] <[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]

<[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June

Please find attached briefing for the Cabinet Secretary's meeting with Fiona Robertson, SQA on Thursday 24 June (briefing attached and ERDM link).

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] and I will dial into the meeting to provide official support.

<https://erdm.scotland.gov.uk:8443/documents/A33589968/details>

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Enclosure 2a – Attachment: Briefing - meeting with SQA Fiona Robertson 24 June

MEETING WITH FIONA ROBERTSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SQA

Date and Time of Engagement	Thursday 24 June 2021, 9:00 -9:45
Where	Teams meeting
Who	Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive of SQA SQA has asked that David Middleton, Chair, SQA Board, joins the meeting.
Key Purpose / Message	An introductory meeting with the Chief Executive of SQA and Chair of SQA Board Discussion is likely to focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of SQA, with a focus on implications for staff and staff morale • National Qualifications 2021 – ACM, appeals and levy • OECD review and qualifications in 2022
Media Handling	Non-media event
Official Support	Graeme Logan, Director of Learning [Redacted s38(1)(b)]
Annexes	Annex A - Discussion Points / lines to take Annex B – Review of SQA Annex C – FMQ OECD Review Annex D – OECD CfE Review and Education Reform Annex E – Background on SQA Annex F – Remit of Advisor on Education Reform

DISCUSSION POINTS / LINE TO TAKE

Review of SQA

Issue: the announcement of the review of SQA will have raised a number of queries from SQA staff. Fiona may ask if you would be willing to speak to staff on the review given the potential impact on staff morale.

Points for discussion:

- Will have seen that I am appointing an advisor, Professor Ken Muir CBE, to take forward consideration and advice on implementation. Expectation is that Ken Muir will be in post for six months starting in August 2021. The draft remit for this post was published on 22 June and includes considering the future of inspection as well as curriculum and assessment. [attached at Annex D]
- Professor Muir will be supported by a dedicated and diverse advisory panel, which will be drawn from academia, practitioners, organisational change experts and others. This will be formed, in discussion with him, in the coming weeks.
- Expect Professor Muir and the Advisory Panel to engage widely, including with the SQA itself, to understand the needs of our schools, practitioners and learners, and set out how we design our education system to meet those needs.
- Understand that this creates an environment of uncertainty, however focus must continue to be on delivering the best outcomes for learners.
- Will understand that the integrity and independence of this process must be preserved. Am conscious however that the SQA is a large organisation staffed by hard-working individuals, and will need to work closely as this process is undertaken.
- I am happy to come and speak at a staff session on the review if that would be helpful. I would also encourage Ken Muir to join such a session.

SQA 21 June - "While our focus right now is on supporting our young people to get the qualifications they deserve this year, I welcome the OECD findings and today's announcement of a new specialist agency with responsibility for both curriculum and assessment. This is an opportunity for significant change that will meet the future needs of our learners, our society and our economy, and which has the support of all.

'We will make a full and positive contribution to the process that lies ahead, drawing on our experience and expertise as Scotland's qualifications and accreditation body, and working in partnership with others across the education system. Whatever outcome eventually emerges, it is critical that we all commit to maintaining the high standards that have long been the hallmark of Scotland's qualifications.'

ACM 2021

Issue: Maintaining confidence in this year's assessment/qualifications delivery.

Points for discussion:

- Importance of continued collaboration and engagement, gathering consensus where possible but recognising the challenge of balancing differing viewpoints.
- We must continue working together, with stakeholders, to ensure faith in the system and deliver in the best interests of all learners.
- You may wish to reiterate to Fiona the ongoing need to provide assurance and support to the education system to manage any risk of misunderstandings and confusion

Appeals 2021

Issue: Concerns about the fairness of the appeals system (and no detriment/exceptional circumstances), and university engagement.

Background: [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Elements of the appeals service continue to attract stakeholder criticism, with calls continuing for a no detriment approach and for exceptional circumstances to be considered.

Points for discussion:

- Welcome the 2021 appeals process which for the first time offers a direct right of appeal for learners.
- You may wish to ask Fiona about her confidence levels in managing and resolving continued stakeholder concerns around the appeals system.
- You may wish to encourage greater engagement with universities and other relevant stakeholders on the implications of the ACM and appeals this year for onward progression of learners.
- Decision not to re-open 2020 appeals now confirmed. Will be important to ensure that any learners still looking to pursue appeals that were eligible under the existing grounds are supported to do so.
- Pleased to see that SQA's review of the appeals process for 2021 included wide consultation on draft proposals – engaging stakeholders, including learners, to ensure fairness and equity for learners are at the heart of the 2021 appeals process.

2022 Qualifications

[redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Points for discussion:

- You may wish to emphasise the importance of continued close stakeholder engagement and collaboration around the implementation of any final agreed approach to delivering the National Qualifications for 2022.

- There will be a need for clear contingency plans in anticipation of any further disruption to learning.
- Keen that decisions are made in time to allow centres to plan for delivery from the start of the new academic session.
- You may wish to seek an update on any lessons learned from the 2021 approach and how this will inform delivery in 2022.

National Qualifications levy / charges

Issue: Increased recent media coverage on SQA levy / charges for national qualifications. COSLA has written to SQA seeking a reduction in this year's National Qualifications levy given the move to an alternative certification model.

Background: SQA charges for certification of national exams has remained unchanged since 2012, and the current charges do not cover the full costs of certification. [redacted: s29(1)(a)]

Points for discussion:

- [redacted: s29(1)(a)]
- Charges for this session will remain at current levels, and we have no plans for any reduction in LA / college levy with the cancellation of exams.

OECD Review of CfE and options for future of assessment and qualifications

Issue: There's a need to manage stakeholder expectations around the OECD's work, particularly the work on assessment and qualifications.

Background: In response to the reaction to August 2020 SQA Results, the Deputy First Minister asked the OECD to expand its work to also include a deeper focus on the future of student assessment and qualifications approaches in the Senior Phase curriculum in Scotland. The aim of this work is to analyse Scotland's approach to student assessment and qualifications and produce options for how Scotland could enhance our approach, informed by international good practice.

Points for discussion:

- Appreciate SQA's input to this work to-date.
- Understand that Professor Stobart (who is undertaking the work on the OECD's behalf) met with Fiona to develop his understanding of the Scottish assessment and qualifications system.
- The OECD highlight that the debate around assessment approaches is not unique to Scotland, and the pandemic has accelerated discussions about the place/prominence of exams in other countries too.
- It would be helpful to seek Fiona's views on how SQA might respond to the reports and what other work has been underway within SQA to look at the future of assessment.
- You are aware the OECD has been asked to prepare a report on the approach to qualifications, which will report in August – it will be helpful to arrange a follow-up discussion with you, and the Chair, to consider their findings.

REVIEW OF SQA**Key Lines to Take**

- The review will include looking at the role, remit and purpose of SQA, as well as considering their functions and governance arrangements.
- This is a key priority for me and will be informed by the findings of the OECD review.
- We need to ensure that national agencies are well placed to support and challenge an increased pace of improvement in Scottish education, and to do this with credibility, rigour and impact. In particular, they need to have high levels of credibility and influence with practitioners.
- Will have seen that I am appointing an Independent Advisor [TBC Ken Muir] to take forward consideration and advice on implementation. Expectation is that Ken Muir will be in post for six months with a detailed remit of his work to be detailed in the coming weeks.
- Expect [Ken] to engage widely, including with the SQA itself, to understand the needs of our schools, practitioners and learners, and set out how we design our education system to meet those needs.
- Understand that this creates an environment of uncertainty, however focus must continue to be on delivering the best outcomes for learners.
- Will understand that the integrity and independence of this process must be preserved. Am conscious however that the SQA is a large organisations staffed by hard-working individuals, and will need to work closely as this process is undertaken.

Background

- OECD recommends: Recommendation 9 - Simplify policies and institutions for clarity and coherence: to align the institutional structures with a clear ownership of CfE, Scotland could explore assigning leadership and development responsibilities for curriculum (and perhaps assessment) to a specialist stand-alone agency; and that it consider refreshing the Inspectorate's remit regarding CfE.
- June 14 The Times (Scotland) reports that teachers want the pending review of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to be led by someone entirely independent of the exam board, the Scottish government and its departments, including Education Scotland.
- June 12 Daily Mail (Scotland) and Herald report that EIS general secretary Larry Flanagan said the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) must be replaced rather than reformed.
- Lib Dems and Greens manifestos call for reform of SQA Board, with greater frontline teaching experience amongst Board members and more stakeholder representation (young people, parents).
- Education and Skills Committee's report (Mar 2021) "Confidence among practitioners in these organisations also appears low and it is clear that structural

reform is now required. With the [OECD report](#) due to be published this year, we urge our successor committee to undertake work early in the new Parliamentary session with a view to establishing what such structural reform could and should encompass.”

- The Lib Dem Education Debate, 17 Feb 2021, raised concerns regarding: SQA’s transparency; perceived disconnection with the wider education sector; lack of trust from teachers, parents and pupils; limited scenario planning; and, teacher representation on the Board. The Lib Dem motion passed.

FMQ – OECD CFE REVIEW AND EDUCATION REFORM

22/23 June: Widespread media coverage following the Education Secretary's statement on OECD review. Claims that **exams could be ditched; pupils and parents to be at heart of reforms in education;** and **warning that a new body to replace SQA "won't happen overnight"**.

22 June: Education Secretary Parly statement: outlined SG acceptance of all 12 OECD recommendations; announced plan for Children & Young People's Education Council; re-confirmed intention to reform Education Scotland and SQA; and announced Prof Ken Muir as advisor to lead this work.

21/22 June: Extensive media coverage of OECD report and Ms Somerville's announcement on SQA and ES reform. Opposition comment included:

- **Greens:** *"Report is a damning judgment of Scotland's exam system and the body which oversees it."*
- **Conservatives:** *"Report exposes how badly the SNP have failed our schools... created a flawed system with too much bureaucracy and not enough accountability."*
- **Labour:** *"Scotland's young people and our education system more generally need resources as well as meaningful reform to address decade-long failings by the SNP."*
- **Liberal Democrats:** *"The exams chaos two years on the trot, the sluggish support provided through the pandemic and the declining international performance could have been avoided if the SNP government had listened."*

21 June: OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation) published their report on Review of Curriculum for Excellence, and GIQ set out SG's acceptance of their 12 recommendations as well as details on planned reform of SQA and Education Scotland and a commitment to update Parliament fully the next day (**22 June**). Questions from opposition centred on:

- **Oliver Mundell:** Clarification on whether exams would be scrapped.
- **Michael Marra:** Bid to receive confirmation of assessment/awarding approach for 2021/22 by mid-July.
- **Ross Greer:** Hopes that the new body to replace SQA isn't just a rebranding exercise and calls for SNSA to be scrapped.
- **Beatrice Wishart:** Calls for a review of teacher terms, conditions and workload.

TOP LINES:**The Scottish Government has welcomed the OECD's independent review and accepted all of its recommendations in full.**

- The OECD found wide support for CfE - its ambition to achieve excellence for all learners remains relevant.
- The independent review report highlighted that Scotland's curriculum continues to be viewed internationally as an inspiring example of curriculum practice.
- The OECD's endorsement is something that I hope we can all unite behind.
- My Government has made clear our commitment to ensuring the best possible educational experience for children and young people as we emerge from the pandemic, including further work to close the poverty-related attainment gap
- The OECD's findings will play a key role in shaping our approach to secure improvements in Scotland's curriculum. That is why we have accepted the OECD's recommendations in full and published our response to each of them.

OECD RECOGNITION OF EXCELLENCE

The OECD's independent review of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence has endorsed its continued relevance and ambition.

- The OECD's report states that CfE has **[quote]**: *"stood the test of time"* and has continued to develop since its inception more than 16 years ago.
- The OECD highlights that **[quote]**: *"Scotland has ranked among higher-than-average country performers on international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), usually scoring at or above OECD average in mathematics, reading and science"*

The OECD report follows other publications highlighting many of the strengths of Scottish education

- In the most recent PISA study (2018) report it states **[quote]** *"Scotland ranked among the top-performing countries in global competence. Scotland was the fourth top-performing country"*
- While the ICEA report published in December 2020 states **[quote]** *"...Scottish education exhibits many strengths. It values equity as well as excellence. It has an excellent standing internationally. It is investing effort and resources to narrow attainment gaps, working with and strengthening the teaching profession."*

The report identifies many other positives in our education system.

- The OECD notes that we have made what it describes as *"great progress"* in supporting and developing teachers and school leaders to implement CfE in their schools.
- The OECD report states **[Quote]**: *"Teachers are well-trained and respected professionals in Scotland, and school leaders have developed strong pedagogical leadership capacities". (OECD report, p.12)*
- It acknowledges that **[Quote]** *"schools and local authorities are afforded significant autonomy to shape CfE"*.
- As a government we are committed to further increasing empowerment of teachers and schools.
- Despite attempts from some quarters to talk down Scottish education, the OECD recognises that **[quote]** *"Education is a source of pride in Scotland, which shows in the broad commitment to CfE and educational excellence for all."*

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT FOR OECD REPORT

The OECD's independent review has been welcomed by learners, parents, teachers and wider stakeholders.

- I agree with the parents group Connect who said on Monday that they were **[quote]** *"pleased that the OECD team could see that education is a source of pride in Scotland"*.
- As Connect went on to say **[quote]**: *"There is huge commitment across the country to improving children's lives through education"*.
- As noted by Larry Flannigan of the EIS union, **[quote]** *"The OECD report highlights some of the strengths of the Scottish Education system, not least being Scotland's place in the top 5 nations in the world regarding global competency"*.
- I share the views of Scotland's Youth Parliament that **[quote]** *"This OECD report offers Scottish education an opportunity to reset its priorities going forward and to put children and young people's rights at its heart."* (Josh Kennedy MSYP)

- I welcome Dr Patrick Roach, NASUWT statement that he is looking forward to: **[quote]** “...working with the Government to build on the many strengths which the OECD has rightly identified and to achieve even more for our children and young people.”

MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN CFE AND SENIOR PHASE ASSESSMENT

We await with interest the outcomes of the OECD’s comparative analysis of assessment and qualifications approaches, expected in the autumn.

- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills confirmed on 22 June that the OECD will publish this by the end of August.
- This work allow us to have initial conversations as to the future of our senior phase qualifications and awards.
- On 22 June, the Cabinet Secretary confirmed that in August we will confirm our central planning assumption for awarding qualifications in 2022.
- We want to give as much certainty to learners, teachers and the system as soon as possible.
- While we entering a period of change in our education system, I know that in the coming months the hard working staff at the SQA will continue to underpin our approach to qualifications. They retain my confidence.

FUTURE OF EXAMS

No decisions have been taken around what any reform of the qualifications would look like.

- We await with interest the outcomes of the OECD’s comparative analysis of assessment and qualifications approaches, expected in the autumn.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills confirmed on 22 June that the OECD will publish this by the end of August.
- This work will allow us to have initial conversations as to the future of our senior phase qualifications and awards.
- We will engage widely with stakeholders on any future plans for assessment and qualifications in the Senior Phase to ensure they better align with the earlier stages of CfE, and are accessible for all learners including those with additional support needs and those from more deprived backgrounds.

DE-CLUTTERING THE LANDSCAPE

On Monday (21 June) the Education Secretary confirmed that the SQA will be replaced with a single specialist agency for curriculum and assessment, in line with the OECD’s recommendation.

- Everyone across Scotland’s education system, including at the SQA and Education Scotland, has worked tirelessly this year under very challenging circumstances. They are owed a debt of gratitude.
- What comes next is a period of change. But it is change in order to improve, to achieve more and to deliver for all of Scotland’s learners.
- We will talk to young people, parents and teachers to build a qualifications and assessment system that works in line with CfE – exactly as the OECD recommends.
- This work will be informed by the next OECD report, due this autumn, and in consultation with young people, parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

In line with the OECD recommendations, Education Scotland will no longer undertake inspections – this work becoming a separate, independent role.

- On Monday (21 June) the Education Secretary announced that responsibility for inspection will no longer sit with Education Scotland and we will look at what further reform of the agency's functions is required.
- The Government, alongside the Advisor on Education Reform, Prof Ken Muir, will engage widely on options for the future of inspection.

I am delighted that Professor Ken Muir CBE has agreed to lead wide engagement on the key functions needed in Scottish education.

- Professor Muir will be supported by a dedicated and diverse advisory panel, drawn from academia, practitioners, organisational change experts and others.
- Together, they will seek the views of stakeholders on the OECD's proposal for the creation of a new curriculum and assessment body and help to design how this will be implemented.
- This will also include moving the inspection function out of Education Scotland, while offering Government recommendations on where the inspection function could sit in future.
- This work is expected to begin in August and will conclude approximately six months later.

BREADTH & DEPTH IN THE SENIOR PHASE CURRICULUM

The OECD recognises that “at Senior Phase, students’ choices of national qualification courses, work-based learning and other qualifications and awards define different progression frameworks.”

- The OECD noted that [quote]: “Learners may choose a blend of national courses and other types of coursework, depending on their interests, learning projects and intentions for post-school destinations.”
- In order to offer the broadest possible range of opportunities to their students, many schools and local authorities are taking innovative approaches to expand the choices on offer.
- This includes creative timetabling, digital learning options and partnership approaches – often working collaboratively with other schools, employers or colleges.
- The Senior Phase curriculum should meet learners’ needs and equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve their ambitions.
- It is for local authorities, schools and their partners to design a curriculum that does this.

INVESTING IN THE PROFESSION

We have already committed to reducing teachers’ class contact time by 1.5 hours per week [manifesto commitment] and are investing in more teachers.

- This will support the OECD's recommendation that dedicated time should be provided to school staff to lead, plan and support the curriculum at school level.
- We will work with our partners in the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) to discuss how this can most effectively be achieved.
- We have already committed, in the first 100 days of this new Government, to fund councils to increase teacher numbers by 1,000 and classroom assistants by 500 support staff.

- This is part of our commitment to 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants over the parliamentary term
- We have provided over £200m to local authorities over 2020/21 and 21/22 for the recruitment of additional education staff to support education recovery. More than 1400 teachers and over 200 support staff have been recruited in the 2020/21 school year.

We are committed to devolving even greater powers to schools while intensifying the discussion around school-based decision-making.

- This work was started in the last Parliament with the publication of the Headteachers' Charter that makes clear the critical role of headteachers in an empowered system.
- This was supported by a full suite of guidance on school empowerment, new guidance on arrangements for devolved school management, and enhanced professional learning for school leaders.
- We continue to invest in developing the capacity of teachers, middle leaders and school leaders through the suite of professional learning and leadership programmes offered nationally by Education Scotland.
- We strongly believe that the decisions about learning and teaching should be taken at school level and will be discussing with the sector how this agenda can be further progressed.
- This is further supported by the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) which, as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, provides headteachers with direct funding so that they can decide how best to invest to support disadvantaged pupils. Schools have just received enhanced £147m of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF), recognising the new and additional challenges schools face as a result of the pandemic schools.
- As Members will know – and indeed would insist – education in Scotland is not controlled centrally; it is the responsibility of local authorities to work with their schools to ensure that their needs are met.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO DELIVER OECD RECOMMENDATIONS

Key priorities of the National Improvement Framework have been agreed across Scottish education and the whole system has a shared responsibility to deliver.

- The NIF has improved the availability, quality and consistency of data, and extended understanding of what works to drive improvements for children and young people across all parts of the Scottish education system.
- It sets out the vision and priorities for Scottish education that have been agreed across the system, and the national improvement activity that needs to be undertaken to help deliver those key priorities. Audit Scotland highlighted that “The NIF, which sets out the key priorities for education, is embedded across the education system and is recognised as central to driving improvement.”
- We are working with our partners to develop an empowered and collaborative system, where everyone's contribution is heard and valued and improving children and young people's outcomes is at the heart of everything we do.
- Audit Scotland commented: “At the national level, exam performance and other attainment measures have improved”

- Further Audit Scotland quote: “Central and local government share an understanding of the policy approach that is focused on achieving broader outcomes with the young person at the centre of the system. However, many commentators and other interested parties tend to place greater emphasis on traditional outcome measures. Media messaging around exam performance is seen as unhelpful and dispiriting by pupils, teachers and councils as this represents only part of the picture.”

SCOTTISH NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS (SNSAs)

The OECD found teachers felt increasingly confident in assessing progress.

- The national standardised assessments are a key element of our improvement agenda, as part of the National Improvement Framework.
- The OECD found that **[quote]** “... (SNSA) are presented as low-stakes to provide teachers with diagnostic information on children’s literacy and numeracy to support teachers’ assessment and plan for effective teaching. In avoiding the pitfalls of high-stakes testing in the school system, Scotland has positioned teacher’s professional assessment work as pivotal for the quality of student learning.”
- As the OECD highlight **[quote]**: “In 2019, local authorities reported that teachers feel increasingly confident when assessing progress. From 2018, Scottish National Standardised Assessments provide an additional source of objective, nationally consistent evidence.”

The OECD reported that, as standardised assessments have been rolled out, Scotland now has a [quote] “well-developed and widely shared view of the centrality of teachers in the assessment process.”

- The OECD report added **[quote]**: “The agency of teachers in assessment and the focus on providing teachers with tools (including census-based assessments) to support their judgement is a particular strength of the system, and one that is internationally regarded.”

The OECD cited David Reedy’s independent review which concluded, in 2019, that assessments had valuable potential and should be continued.

- The Reedy Review found **[quote]** “strong examples of schools where headteachers and teachers operate a play-based approach and find no incompatibility between that and the P1 SNSA.”

Assessment is a central part of everyday learning and teaching throughout the Broad General Education, and the National Standardised Assessments align with that approach.

- 2018/19 Learner feedback showed 91% of Primary 1 children who had undertaken the assessments indicated they were happy doing them.

It should be noted that we are accepting all 12 recommendations from the OECD in full – and there is no recommendation about standardised assessments.

- In our more detailed response to the OECD report we will consider its comments about the re-introduction of a survey-based approach to gathering data.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S VIEWS

We are committed to ensuring the voices of young people, parents, teachers and practitioners, are at the centre of our education policy.

- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills outlined on Tuesday (22 June) that we will reconvene the Scottish Education Council (SEC) – with a refreshed membership and renewed purpose, to support the delivery of the OECD’s recommendations and wider education policy as we recover from Covid-19.
- Young people will have seats on the Scottish Education Council.
- We are also establishing a Children & Young People’s Education Council to sit alongside the SEC – to ensure a wide range of young people’s viewpoints are taken into account.
- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills will chair both of these Councils, and – crucially – the input and advice of young people will have parity of esteem.
- We will engage with young people organisations in the next few months to get their expert input as we put in place the new arrangements and to ensure we take a rights-based approach.
- This builds on our experience of the last year where the Scottish Youth Parliament has been represented on the Covid Education Recovery Group, and the Youth Education Recovery Panel has delivered a number of insights helping to inform our approach to education recovery.

IMPLEMENTATION OF OECD RECOMMENDATIONS

The OECD’s report makes clear the need for a system-wide response to deliver improvements that support the best possible outcomes for our young people.

- I welcome the statement from stakeholders outlining their commitment to work with Government to implement these recommendations.
- We will now work practitioners, learners, parents and others to co-design a detailed implementation plan, to be published in September.

TIMING OF OECD REPORT PUBLICATION

In April 2020 the Deputy First Minister informed Parliament that due to Covid-19 restrictions it would be necessary to postpone publication of the report to June 2021.

- The decision to postpone engagement with stakeholders until September and publication of the final report until June was agreed with national partners and the OECD.

OECD REVIEW**Background**

1. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) represented a significant reform to put in place a coherent 3-18 curriculum in Scotland. It places learners at the heart of education and at its centre are four fundamental capacities which reflect and recognise the lifelong nature of education and learning. More than a decade has passed since its inception.
2. The Scottish Government commissioned the OECD to conduct an independent review during 2015 that was focused on the Broad General Education (BGE) in order to inform the ongoing development of education policy, practice and leadership in Scotland.
3. Maintaining a focus on continual improvement and following the Education and Skills Committee's work of 2019 on subject choice in the Senior Phase which concluded the need for a review of BGE and Senior Phase, in May 2019 the Deputy First Minister announced the commissioning of an independent review of the Senior Phase curriculum. The intended purpose of this was to better understand how the Senior Phase curriculum is being designed and implemented in schools and to identify areas for potential development to ensure that this phase of the curriculum contributes as effectively as possible to the education of young people in Scotland.
4. Plans for a review of the Senior Phase had been backed by the Scottish Parliament and key education stakeholders. However, in January 2020, the Scottish Parliament called for the review to be extended to cover all of CfE including the BGE, the Senior Phase and the articulation between them.
5. Furthermore, in response to the reaction to August 2020 SQA Results, the Deputy First Minister asked the OECD to expand its work to also include a deeper focus on the future of student assessment and qualifications approaches in the Senior Phase curriculum in Scotland. The aim of this work is to analyse Scotland's approach to student assessment and qualifications and produce options for how Scotland could enhance our approach, informed by international good practice.
6. Adopting a broader perspective to the review of CfE has allowed consideration of the CfE experience as a whole from learners' perspectives. It has also allowed an evaluation of progress in implementing CfE at all levels in the system and an assessment of the effectiveness of the articulation between the BGE and Senior Phase. Overall, it provides a significant opportunity to consider what we want Scotland's Curriculum to be over the next 10 years and beyond.

The Review**Guiding principles:**

7. At the outset, it was agreed that:

- Young people's experience and learning should be the most important consideration throughout the review, and this should consider the experiences of all learners, including those with additional support needs.
- The principles and aspirations of CfE have had widespread support from practitioners, learners, parents, and politicians in Scotland and, as such, are not questioned in the review.
- The focus of the review is to understand how the policy aims are being implemented, in partnership across schools, colleges, community learning and development and employers in Scotland, for the benefit of learners.

Aims:

8. Further information on the scope of the Review can be found at Annex A but the overarching aims of the review have been to:
 - better understand how the curriculum is being implemented in schools, local authorities and delivery partners (looking at its design and implementation);
 - identify what is working well and where progress is being made and, where possible, how progress might be strengthened and, or accelerated;
 - identify particular areas/issues that require to be focused on for development in order to ensure that the curriculum contributes as effectively as possible to the education of all young people in Scotland; and
 - analyse Scotland's approach to student assessment and qualifications and produce options for how we could enhance our approach, informed by international good practice.
9. The review has been a collaborative exercise, with education practitioners and learners playing a key role in the co-ordination of the review, understanding curriculum practice in Scotland and considering the OECD's preliminary findings.

Approach and Methodology to the main review

10. In using the OECD to carry out the Review, we are using international experts who have engaged with Scotland on previous reviews, and has wide ranging experience in this area. They have used the OECD's well-established [Implementing Policies: Supporting Change in Education framework](#).
11. The assessment has looked at the Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase, from an implementation perspective. The analysis was undertaken following standard OECD methodology:
 - drawing on relevant international and Scottish data and available evidence from education stakeholders and partners provided by Scotland;
 - in-depth "virtual" visits to four schools in Scotland plus a range of focus group sessions with headteachers, partners, learners and parents;
 - exchanges with a practitioners' forum; and

- delivery of two stakeholder webinars (16 March on the main Review and 18 May on the assessment and qualifications work) to discuss their preliminary findings.

Emerging themes on CfE

12. *Confidential, preliminary findings* on the main review were shared by the OECD with members of the Scottish Practitioner Forum, Scottish Government, stakeholders involved in the webinar, and the Scottish Parliament in March.

Overarching points:

13. Overall, the OECD found **wide support for CfE and its bold vision** to achieve excellence for all learners, embodied in the four capacities. In turn, CfE continues to be viewed internationally as an inspiring example of curriculum practice.
14. The OECD found that CfE's framework works well in BGE and for learners taking Advanced Highers, where the concepts, pedagogical and learning approaches are coherent and where local implementation (by the school) is consistent with policy intentions. However, the OECD found some ambiguity about the role of knowledge and ways of knowing in a 21st century curriculum framework, and how the structure, learning practices and assessment approaches in the Senior Phase curriculum adapt to this to be consistent with CfE's vision, and allow for smooth curriculum experience from 3 to 18. The OECD suggest that **adjustments might be needed in the concepts of CfE and implementation tools in both the BGE and Senior Phase** but stress that CfE's design offers the flexibility needed to further improve learners' journey.
15. The OECD also acknowledge the **efforts made to engage stakeholders'** throughout CfE's lifecycle, but identify a gap between stakeholders' involvement and their ability to impact on effective enhancements to its implementation. The OECD have reported that many describe the ownership of CfE as being described "fragmented" with many lacking clarity on their respective roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the terminology used to describe the curriculum and the associated documentation whilst helpful may have been "overwhelming" and too technical and open to interpretation.
16. Stakeholders agreed that schools and the profession should hold responsibility for conception, implementation and outcomes of their own curricula, provided the rest of the system fulfil their own responsibilities and offer support where required. In moving forward, it will be vital for **stakeholder engagement to continue to be at CfE's heart, with an emphasis on shared ownership and leadership.**
17. The OECD's preliminary findings highlight the progress made in developing and supporting teachers' capacity to be curriculum makes, and the capacity of school leaders to lead on the implementation of CfE on the ground. Although conversely the report highlights that this in itself has become challenging for teachers and school leaders, in terms of the time taken to consider new policy initiatives and the expectations this places on the profession to lead, plan and deliver the curriculum locally. In response the OECD emphasise the **need to align and simplify the**

policy environment with CfE and its many initiatives. An identified cycle of policy review may be helpful moving forward.

18. Their draft report also highlights the **need to align learner assessment, qualifications practices and system evaluation to CfE's vision.** On the latter it is highlighted that the data generated by the current system could better support the delivery of CfE's ambitions. Please note, the issues around assessment and qualifications are likely to be explored in more depth in the second (related) piece of work to be delivered by the OECD in late August.
19. The **governance arrangements** currently in place to engage stakeholders, gain feedback and agree on key CfE developments require consideration moving forward, specifically in terms of planning CfE's long-term aspirations.

Specific (draft) recommendations

20. The draft report contains 12 recommendations grouped under four themes with an emphasis on focusing on children and young people's learning experiences and trajectories:
- Theme 1 – Balance CfE so children and young people can fully benefit from a coherent learning experience from 3-18.
 - **Recommendation 1** – Re-assess CfE's aspirational vision against emerging trends in education to take account of evolutions in education and society. This might include updating some of the vision's core elements and their implications for practice, in particular the role of knowledge in CfE; and defining indicators aligned to the vision to help understand students' progress across all four capacities.
 - **Recommendation 2** – Find a better balance between breadth and depth of learning throughout CfE, to deliver Scotland's commitment to provide all learners with a rich learning experience throughout school education. The design of CfE could better help learners consolidate a common knowledge base, skills and attitudes by the end of BGE, allowing learners to nurture and develop this base through the Senior Phase and the choices it offers.
 - **Recommendation 3** – Adapt the Senior Phase to match the vision of CfE – Scotland should consider adapting the pedagogical and assessment practices, and the structure of learning pathways in the Senior Phase to enhance learners' experiences of secondary school/education, helping them to develop CfE's four capacities continuously.
 - **Recommendation 4** – Continue building curricular capacity at various levels of the system using research, by developing the environment of curriculum design support around schools, including supporting exchange and collaborations between practitioners for curriculum design and experimentation within and across schools, and collaboration between schools and universities.
 - Theme 2 - Combine effective collaboration with clear roles and responsibilities

- **Recommendation 5 - Ensure stable, purposeful and impactful stakeholder involvement with CfE:** system leaders at national and local levels could continue encouraging the involvement of stakeholders (and in particular, students) with CfE by structuring better each engagement initiative they offer, clarifying its purpose, designing it accordingly, and letting stakeholder input inform decision-making.
 - **Recommendation 6 - Revise the division of responsibilities for CfE:** system leaders and stakeholders could revise the current allocation of responsibility for CfE, including responsibilities for its strategic direction, its reviews and updates, and the response to schools' needs of support with curriculum issues. The revised allocation should be stable over time to fulfil Scotland's commitment to a shared ownership of CfE.
 - **Recommendation 7 - Structure a coherent communication strategy to support developments of CfE:** system leaders, with the Learning Directorate and Education Scotland at the forefront, could develop a communication strategy in support of CfE's next developments, and collaborate with practitioners, scholars and other CfE stakeholders as they do so.
- Theme 3 - Consolidate institutional policy processes for effective change
 - **Recommendation 8 - Provide dedicated time to lead, plan and support CfE at school level:** in support of the next phase of development of CfE, Scotland can consider the provision of additional dedicated and ring-fenced time for all teachers, for curriculum planning, for monitoring of student achievement and in support of moderation of assessment outcomes.
 - **Recommendation 9 - Simplify policies and institutions for clarity and coherence:** to align the institutional structures with a clear ownership of CfE, Scotland could explore assigning leadership and development responsibilities for curriculum (and perhaps assessment) to a specialist stand-alone agency; and that it consider refreshing the Inspectorate's remit regarding CfE.
 - **Recommendation 10 - Align qualifications, system evaluation and curriculum to deliver on the commitment of Building the Curriculum 5:** Scotland could first, identify modes of student assessment that could be used in school and external settings at Senior Phase levels, in alignment with the four capacities and CfE philosophy; and second, re-develop a sample-based evaluation system to collect robust and reliable data necessary to support curriculum reviews and decision-making.
 - **Recommendation 11 - Develop a systematic approach to curriculum review:** Scotland could consider establishing a systematic curriculum review cycle with a planned timeframe and specific review agenda, led by the specialist stand-alone agency.

- Theme 4 - Lead the next steps of CfE with a long-term focus
 - **Recommendation 12 - Adopt a structured and long-term approach to implementation:** building on the system's existing strengths, Scotland should consider how to take on board the recommendations contained in this document as a coherent package rather than individual policy actions for the next steps.

Approach and Methodology for the Assessment and Qualifications work

21. This part of the OECD's work has set out to consider Scotland's current assessment and qualifications system, and what might be learnt from other comparative assessment systems.

22. The OECD appointed Professor Gordon Stobart's to undertake this exercise. Professor Stobart's work has primarily been a desk-based review of comparative assessment systems in England, Wales, Ireland, Hong Kong, Queensland, Australia, Ontario, France, Norway and New Zealand. It considers how these countries have aligned pedagogy and assessment approaches with 'global skills' requirements. This work has not involved the level of stakeholder consultation, as the OECD's main review of CfE. However, the preliminary findings and options for Scotland to consider were presented to, and discussed with, stakeholders on 18 May.

Overarching themes:

23. As well as providing a factual overview of assessment in the Senior Phase of education in Scotland, Professor Stobart has considered:

- Other international curriculum reform programme's and the place of assessment within these.
- The advancement of technology, both in terms of what it can deliver but also skills/competence (of teachers and learners themselves).
- The current and future role of teachers in summative assessment.
- Socio changes such as the school leaving age and diversity, and cultural awareness of learners.
- The possible barriers to assessment systems being able to adapt to educational changes, and perceived barriers to reform.
- The extent to which current governance and accountability structures may/may not support assessment reform.
- The approach taken to assessment internationally, due to Covid-related disruption.
- The factors needed for a trusted, credible and manageable assessment system which places learners at its heart.

24. The preliminary draft suggests some possible options for Scotland to consider if it wishes to further develop an assessment system which is better aligned with CfE and meets the demands of 21st century learning and teaching.

- **Option 1: Simplify the S4-5 assessment system by “de-cluttering” the historical diet of exams** and replacing it with some form of school graduation diploma based on school assessments plus other contributions to the community, at S4. It explores the step ladder of qualifications and exams taken year on year, and the variability of such an approach moving forward. The report argues that some form of graduation diploma may allow for clearer recognition of the development of the four capacities and offer better alignment with curriculum (and thus quals) in S5-6.
- **Option 2: Develop a more resilient SP assessment system building on the lessons from Covid.** The report points to the lessons that could be learnt from ‘mixed economy’ assessment and awarding systems which were based on a combination of teachers’ continuous assessment, on school-based exams plus external exams.
- **Option 3: Seek greater alignment between the goals of CfE and the assessment system** by widening the forms of assessment. It argues that Scotland’s exams system is relatively traditional and cautious, despite the pedagogy encouraged by CfE. It suggests that SQA could consider: more use of online exam resources and interactive approaches; incorporation of e-portfolios and personal projects for external marking; and more use of oral presentations and/or practicals as assessment formats.
- **Option 4: Reconsider the role and contribution of school based assessment.** The decision to remove mandatory unit assessments from NQs is explored in some detail here, and the sensitivities around any reversal. However, the report outlines the opportunity for a more central role for continuous teacher assessment during the year (via coursework and school tests), the role of moderation (and by whom), and the potential opportunities for oral and practical presentations of a learners skills (set and moderated locally). The issues around trust and confidence are also touched on here.
- **Option 5: Systematic consultation and engagement of young people in decisions affecting assessment arrangements.** Similar points made here to that contained within the Priestley Review around appetite for continuous assessment. I have some concerns here that the Report hasn’t highlighted any other evidence of learners views on this matter, when there are other pieces of anecdotal evidence e.g. SQA Future’s Work, YoungScot insights etc. I will ensure this is reflected in our factual comments.
- **Option 6: Further develop the role of vocational qualifications in broadening the curriculum.** The report highlights the opportunity for Scotland to raise the profile of vocational qualifications (via mainstreaming) as a way of broadening its curriculum offer and developing learners’ capacities.

25. This work will report by the end of August. Again, this publication date is driven by the OECD whose report it is.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

BACKGROUND ON SQA

- SQA is sponsored by the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate and employs over 900 people in its Glasgow and Dalkeith offices.
- SQA's strategic direction is developed by the SQA Board, and its committees.
- Fiona Robertson is the Chief Executive, and David Middleton is the Chair of the Board. An Advisory Council, with around 20 stakeholders, is in place to provide advice to the Board and Scottish Ministers.
- SQA works across the UK and internationally, with the majority of work taking place in Scotland.

SQA Budget in 21/22

- SQA has an estimated income (from exam charges and international work) of £46.1m and total operating costs of £88.0m (resource and capital)
- Total grant-in-aid and accommodation costs provided by Scottish Government is forecast at £41.9m (excludes AME). Note £10.7 m of this is an additional pressure (ie not funded through the Budget Bill) agreed with the SG at the start of the financial year.
- With the cancellation of exams in 2021 SQA offered up a saving of £7m on resource costs, which has reduced the resource budget pressure from £15.8m to £8.8m.

Key activity / responsibilities

SQA's functions are set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended by the Scottish Qualifications Act 2002. The organisation has two main roles: accreditation, and awarding qualifications. As SQA Accreditation accredits SQA Awarding there are legislative and operational measures in place to separate the two functions.

- **SQA Accreditation:** accredits qualifications other than degrees; and approves, and quality assures awarding bodies (including SQA Awarding) that plan to enter people for these qualifications. Accreditation is funded by the Advanced Learning and Science Directorate.
- **SQA Awarding Body:** devises and develops qualifications; validates qualifications; reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date; arranges for, assists in, and carries out, the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications; quality-assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications; issues certificates to candidates. Awarding is funded by the Learning Directorate.

Current Governance Arrangements

Meeting	Purpose of Meeting	Frequency
Cabinet Secretary Meeting with SQA Board Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide the Minister with an update on the work being undertaken by SQA and performance against targets • To ensure Board aware of Ministerial objectives, and this is built into Corporate / business planning • To discuss future financial decisions 	Bi-annual

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity for the Minister to recognise the achievements and hard work of the Board and SQA 	
Director's Meetings with SQA Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be updated on progress and ensure work aligns with Ministerial priorities. • To interrogate robustly the work SQA undertakes. • To discuss plans for future work • Recognise achievements • Annual Appraisal of Chair <p><i>Regular policy meetings take place with the Chief Executive and Ministers / officials. We are currently considering what the best options are for developing engagement on the governance aspects</i></p>	Quarterly
Finance and Accountability Meeting (officials meeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable the sponsor team to scrutinise the work and spending of SQA • To monitor SQA spend over the year, question any unexpected over/underspends, understand financial pressures and how resources are best managed. • Update SQA on the expectations of the Government regarding current and future spending plans. • To give SQA an opportunity to raise concerns and highlight good practice. • To enable sponsor team to support Director and DFM meetings 	Monthly

**Advisor to the Scottish Government on the reform of SQA and Education
Scotland**

DRAFT REMIT

This document sets out the terms we have agreed for Professor Ken Muir CBE (the Advisor) to act as an advisor to the Scottish Government on the reform of the SQA and Education Scotland. This work will be carried out on the equivalent of four days/week alongside his role as Honorary Professor at the University of the West of Scotland. The Principal of the University of the West of Scotland is supportive of this arrangement.

Scope

In his role as the Advisor, he will provide advice to the Scottish Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on aspects of education reform. This will include designing the implementation of the OECD's recommendations for structural change of the SQA and Education Scotland, including delivery of the national curriculum, assessment, qualification and inspection functions.

This will include likely replacement of the SQA with a new curriculum and assessment agency. In addition, the Advisor will consider the rationale and purpose for reform as set out by Scottish Ministers, and ensure that any structural reform is designed to achieve this.

The Advisor will establish a supporting panel, to be decided in consultation with the Scottish Government and stakeholders, that will include diverse representation appropriate to the task, to include, amongst others, academia, practitioners and organisational change expertise. The work will be undertaken with as much openness and transparency as is possible.

The Advisor will engage widely across the education sector and will ensure in particular that the views of children, young people, families and practitioners are taken in to account. A key objective is ensuring that we fully understand their needs, and design the education system to deliver the best possible support that is required.

The conclusions that the Advisor reaches will be taken independently of the Scottish Government and all other institutions, but will have access to SG officials and appropriate data and information.

Activities

The activities of the Advisor and panel will include:

- Leading wide engagement, including formal consultation, on the reform of SQA and Education Scotland, including key national functions in Scottish education. This will include consideration of qualifications (including accreditation), assessment, curriculum, inspections and professional learning. This will also

include advising on how best to replace SQA with a possible new curriculum and assessment agency.

- Seeking the views of stakeholders on the OECD's proposal for the possible creation of a new curriculum and assessment body.
- Consider the needs of the different sectors of education which the agencies work with (including ELC, schools, special education, further education, and for example in the case of the SQA other training providers).
- Seek and take account of appropriate specialist legal and human resources advice on the impact of any suggested structural changes. This should include consideration of any legislative changes which may be required in relation to the SQA and Ministerial powers in relation to inspection.
- With the decision taken that the inspection function will move out of Education Scotland, advising on the purpose, remit and situation of the inspection function.
- Gathering evidence for and inputting to relevant impact assessments, including on equalities and children's rights and wellbeing.
- Advising overall on the optimal future configuration and design of functions, and how this can best be implemented.
- Taking part and leading events and public engagements as necessary.
- Publishing findings at the conclusion and at appropriate points during the work.
- Considering impacts on the wider education system in Scotland, and taking the wider context in to account, including the Scottish Government's current ongoing review of the Regional Improvement Collaboratives.
- Make connections and consider wider policy interests and Scottish Government priorities for children and families in Scotland. This would include key priorities around closing the poverty-related attainment gap, child poverty and achieving excellence and equity through education. This should also take account of priorities across wider services for children.

Timescales

The Advisor will begin this work in August 2021 and it will conclude in around 6 months' after start date. The intention will be to also have the majority of the panel membership confirmed by that point.

Secretariat support

Secretariat support required by the Advisor and Panel will be provided through the Learning Directorate in Scottish Government. This secretariat will support the Advisor in his activities, including those set out above.

Sponsor arrangements

The Workforce, Infrastructure and Reform Division in the Learning Directorate will be the Advisor's sponsor Division within the Scottish Government. The named sponsor for this work will be Liza McLean, Deputy Director for Learning Workforce, Infrastructure and Reform.

Enclosure 3 - SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting

From:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Sent: 01 July 2021 15:53

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: David.Middleton@sqa.org.uk; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>;

Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm)

<Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

Many thanks, Ms Somerville has noted.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

@gov.scot>

Sent: 01 July 2021 09:54

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: David.Middleton@sqa.org.uk; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>;

Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm)

<Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>;

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting

PS/Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc: David Middleton, SQA

Fiona Robertson, SQA

Please find below a revised note of the introductory meeting with SQA. This updates the note to include actions on SQA being fully involved in the reform process, and keeping SG updated on risks to delivery.

Helen

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

SQA Introductory Meeting – 24 June 2021

Please find below a note of the introductory meeting with Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive SQA, and David Middleton, Chair SQA Board, on 24 June 21. Graeme

Logan, Director for Learning, also attended the meeting with officials from Learning Directorate.

Cabinet Secretary welcomed Fiona Robertson and David Middleton to the meeting, inviting them to share their thoughts on the announcement that the SQA would be replaced and the review work announced.

Mr Middleton was keen to hear what kind of involvement the Cabinet Secretary would like to see from Chief Executive, Chair and the Board in the review. Cabinet Secretary expects staff at both SQA and Education Scotland will have an important role in the review.

Ms Robertson reflected on the challenges of the past week, and the impact on staff morale. It will be helpful for staff to hear from Cabinet Secretary and welcomed the forthcoming staff session. Cabinet Secretary reiterated her faith in SQA to deliver the ACM this year, and asked for feedback on areas SQA staff would like her to cover at Tuesday morning's staff session.

Ms Robertson highlighted the breadth of SQA qualifications, including vocational qualifications for colleges, employers and training providers and the range of revenue streams, and for Prof Muir to be aware of this as he undertakes the review.

Ms Robertson highlighted the potential risks and cost of uncertainty. Like many parts of the public sector, SQA relies on the goodwill of staff every year. She expressed concerns about the risks of losing staff and revenue, arising from this uncertainty. This could also risk delivery to learners. SQA would keep Ministers updated.

However, the review was also seen as an opportunity for positive change. The alignment of curriculum and assessment in one organisation could be very helpful, and is important to consider through the lens of the learner journey. Ms Robertson highlighted that SQA would continue to work positively and constructively with a focus on delivering for learners and the expertise in SQA would be critical to delivery in the future. Cabinet Secretary welcomed the constructive approach from SQA.

Ms Robertson raised the need to consider culture and capacity across Scottish education, alongside any structural reform. There was learning here from the development of the new qualifications and the subsequent decision by Ministers to remove units in 2016.

Ms Robertson highlighted how hard staff were working to deliver the appeals in 2021, and noted that staff would be working over the weekend to answer calls from learners. SQA will provide an update on the number of registrations for appeals when this is available. Cabinet Secretary noted her appreciation of the work of SQA staff, noting the positive work with the NQ group and engagement more widely with stakeholders. She highlighted the importance of people having faith in the appeals process. Ms Robertson noted the work of NQ Group and preparing for results day on 10 Aug. She also highlighted the issue of maintaining standards across years, and that trust in SQA qualifications is very high.

The approach for national qualifications in 2022 was raised, with Cabinet Secretary noting we need further public health advice to inform 2022 assessment. Ms Robertson noted that delivering an exam diet is a 13 month process and that we will need to have contingency plans in place, including in schools and colleges to ensure that pupils learning and teaching continues if there is any disruption / self isolation due to COVID.

Mr Middleton asked the Director for Learning to re-consider plans for the SQA Board recruitment round in light of recent announcements on the review.

Actions:

- **SG to ensure SQA are fully involved in the Muir reform process**
- **SQA to keep SG updated on risks to delivery on an ongoing basis**
- **SQA to provide a summary of areas staff would like covered at the staff session on Tuesday morning**
- **SQA to provide an update on number of registrations for appeals**
- **SG to consider options on SQA Board recruitment**

From: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Sent: 28 June 2021 15:54

To: [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: David.Middleton@sqa.org.uk; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting

Thanks [Redacted s38(1)(b)], Ms Somerville is content with note of meeting

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

From:

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Sent: 25 June 2021 10:36

To: Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <CabSecES@gov.scot>

Cc: David.Middleton@sqa.org.uk; Fiona Robertson <fiona.robertson@sqa.org.uk>; Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>; McLean L (Liza) <Liza.McLean@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

Subject: SQA Introductory Meeting - 24 June - note of meeting

PS/Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Cc: David Middleton, SQA
Fiona Robertson, SQA

SQA Introductory Meeting – 24 June 2021

Please find below a note of the introductory meeting with Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive SQA, and David Middleton, Chair SQA Board, on 24 June 21. Graeme Logan, Director for Learning, also attended the meeting with officials from Learning Directorate.

Cabinet Secretary welcomed Fiona Robertson and David Middleton to the meeting, inviting them to share their thoughts on the review of SQA.

Mr Middleton was interested in what kind of involvement the Cabinet Secretary would like to see from Chief Executive, Chair and the Board in the review. Cabinet Secretary expects staff at both SQA and Education Scotland will have an important role in the review. Prof Ken Muir will be leading the review and will want to speak to a range of staff from SQA to inform the review.

Ms Robertson reflected on the challenges of the past week, and the impact on staff morale on what has been a difficult message. It will be helpful for staff to hear from Cabinet Secretary and welcomed the forthcoming staff session. Cabinet Secretary reiterated her faith in SQA to deliver the ACM this year, and asked for feedback on areas SQA staff would like her to cover at Tuesday morning's staff session.

Ms Robertson highlighted the breath of SQA qualifications, particularly in the college sector with HNC and HNDs and apprenticeships, and for Prof Muir to be aware of this as he undertakes the review.

Ms Robertson highlighted potential risks to continuity of delivery, if for example, IT staff were to leave given the uncertainty.

The review was seen as an opportunity for positive change, and important to consider the learner journey through this. Ms Robertson highlighted that SQA would continue to work positively and constructively with a focus on delivering for learners. Cabinet Secretary welcomed the constructive approach from SQA.

Ms Robertson raised the need to consider capacity, and how to build this, within the teaching profession to enable the profession to respond to the review.

Ms Robertson highlighted how hard staff were working to deliver the appeals in 2021, and noted that staff would be working over the weekend to answer calls from learners. SQA will provide an update on the number of registrations for appeals when this is available. Cabinet Secretary noted her appreciation of the work of SQA staff, noting the positive work with the NQ group and engagement more widely with stakeholders. She highlighted the importance of people having faith in the appeals process. Ms Robertson noted the work of NQ Group on appeals and preparing for results day on 10 Aug. She also highlighted the issue of maintaining standards across years, and that trust in SQA qualifications is very high.

The approach for national qualifications in 2022 was raised, with Cabinet Secretary noting we need further public health advice to inform 2022 assessment. Ms Robertson noted that delivering an exam diet is a 13 month process and that we will need to have contingency plans in place, including in schools and colleges to ensure

that pupils learning and teaching continues if there is any disruption / self isolation due to COVID.

Mr Middleton asked the Director for Learning to re-consider plans for the SQA Board recruitment round in light of recent announcements on the review.

Actions:

- **SQA to provide a summary of areas staff would like covered at the staff session on Tuesday morning**
- **SQA to provide an update on number of registrations for appeals**
- **SG to consider options on SQA Board recruitment**

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]