Dear Mr McClelland

Thank you for attending before the Committee last week and giving evidence on your spending decisions and achievement of outcomes. During the course of the session there were various requests for, and offers to, provide further information. This letter brings together all those requests. It also seeks, in a number of areas, elaboration and/or clarification of information provided in response to members’ questions. In all cases a reference to the column number in the Official Report of the meeting is provided.

1. In answer to John Pentland’s question about SDS’s influence, it was indicated that SDS has made a strong case to the Scottish Government to do a lot more work in early years’ education. Can you elaborate on how successful your representations have been and outline what action SDS is now intending to take to implement this work? Column 3.

2. More generally in the whole area of measuring success, the Committee is interested in the achievements of SDS. Considerable information was provided on SDS activity and input, as was alignment with the NPF. Could you set out the measures relating to SDS activity that are in place to identify your successes -both where SDS works directly with clients and in partnership activity?

3. In response to a question from Mary Scanlon, you advised you guarantee to fund places of any provider who satisfies your criteria related to various completion measures. The measures relate to past performance. Is this information considered on the overall performance of the provider or is it to broken down to the subject level? What is required of potential new entrants who do not have track records of delivering training funded by you? Column 6.
4. Colleges Scotland’s submission to the Committee highlighted the high cost of making applications for funding and suggested a degree of exemption for colleges with a proven track record. What consideration is being given to easing the administrative burden on applicants?

5. There was discussion about the commissioning of work that intends to track and evaluate the longer term benefits to participants in apprenticeships and other work-based learning. Could you confirm when information from this work will be available? Columns 8-9

6. Liam McArthur noted the absence of any reference to activity to work with schools and colleges in the SDS goals and operational objectives. Could you indicate the reasons for this change? Column 17

7. You helpfully provided considerable background information relating to the Fair Work agenda. Could you provide the further detail of the work being undertaken by SDS as sought by the Convener? Columns 33-36

8. There was considerable discussion around the proposal for foundation MA’s at S5 and S6. I look forward to the further information offered, including details of the timescale and on-going discussion of tariffs for these apprenticeships. Various but see column 47

9. You state in the Corporate Plan you are “committed to ensuring we can measure and track progress in delivering our ambitious five year plan”. Can you indicate and provide detail on how this is to be achieved during the currency of the plan?

I would be grateful for a response by 23 November.

Yours sincerely

STEWART MAXWELL MSP
CONVENER