



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Dr Janet Brown  
Chief Executive  
Scottish Qualifications Authority

### By email

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16 September 2016

Dear Dr Brown

The Education and Skills Committee has decided to undertake scrutiny of a number of NDPBs and Agencies prior to the publication of the Draft Scottish Government 2017/18 budget. The Committee will scrutinise the work of:

- Education Scotland;
- Scottish Qualifications Authority;
- Skills Development Scotland; and
- Scottish Funding Council.

The focus of the scrutiny will be how these bodies deliver the outcomes expected of them by the Scottish Government, how their strategic direction reflects the Christie Principles and their contribution to the Scottish Government's climate change targets. This approach is in line with recommendations of the [Finance Committee guidance to all subject committees](#) and follows on from the work of the Education and Culture Committee last year.

It is likely that the Committee will seek the attendance of the SQA at a Committee meeting in November to explore these issues. In advance, the Committee would be grateful if you would provide a written statement and there are a number of issues the Committee would like specific commentary on which are outlined below. The Committee will also be seeking views from a number of stakeholders on the performance and strategy of the SQA prior to the evidence session taking place.

The Committee notes that the SQA has published its corporate plan 2016-19 and this sets out the strategic intent and goals of the SQA and how this maps onto the National Outcomes. Other NDPBs (e.g. SDS and the SFC) receive ministerial letters which set out the outcomes expected of those bodies in the forthcoming financial

year. I would be grateful if you could share the most recent similar Scottish Government letter with the Committee as soon as possible and, within the wider submission, describe how the outcomes required in the letter are reflected in the SQA's strategic plans.

The Committee would also be grateful if you could confirm how the SQA measures its impact on National Outcomes and National Indicators and please highlight the latest data and assessment available on the SQA's impact in this regard. As part of this it would be helpful to understand how the SQA quality assures its work to ensure that it is considered to be of high quality by your stakeholders and whether the quality assurance is performed internally or externally. I would also be grateful if you could identify how the SQA's strategies and financial plans prioritise the SQA's work to ensure that it has the greatest effect on delivering National Outcomes.

The Committee is also interested in how the SQA has and is taking forward its work on the basis of the four Christie Principles of reform. We would be grateful if you could point to any particular programmes or reforms that demonstrate this.

The Committee is aware that the policy landscape you work in is fluid and that there remain constraints on public sector spending. The Committee would be grateful if you could outline how the SQA undertakes long term financial planning and provide evidence and assurance that the SQA is able to manage change effectively.

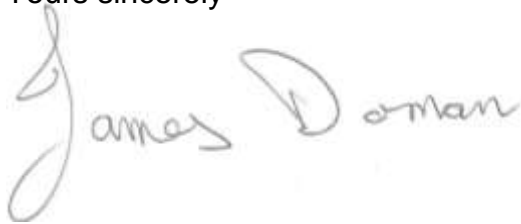
The Committee is also specifically interested in how the SQA is contributing to the Scottish Government's targets on climate change. The Committee would be interested to hear how the SQA is encouraging and enabling Scottish society to use natural resources more efficiently, as well as how the SQA is doing so itself.

Finally, the Committee notes that the SQA regularly receives significant in-year funding above what is set out in the draft budgets. The Committee would be grateful for the SQA's view on why it is necessary to change the allocation of resource of the SQA after the budget has been considered and agreed by Parliament.

We would be grateful for a submission covering these issues, along with any other matters in regard to the performance and financial strategy of SQA you would wish to highlight, by **Friday 14 October 2016**. The Committee would however be grateful for a copy of the Scottish Government letter which sets out the outcomes expected of the SQA in this financial year as soon as possible.

I appreciate that the Committee is seeking a large amount of information from you, and your time to attend Committee. So if there is anything you wish to discuss having read the above, please call Ned Sharratt the Assistant Clerk to the Committee on 0131 348 5204.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Dornan". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink.

**JAMES DORNAN MSP  
CONVENER**