

## **Economy and Fair Work Committee**

**Evidence Session on Skills Delivery: 7 May 2025**

### **Scottish Decorators Federation Evidence Submission**

#### **SQA**

**On the subject of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, which is now being moved to Education Scotland;**

The Scottish Construction Industry is in agreement that the regulator and awarding body currently both parts of SQA should be separated. What is in question is where is the regulator going to sit after the separation of the two elements of the current system. Whilst we agree that the two elements are separated we are not convinced that moving the current staff to a body with a new name will have any significant improvement in the delivery of qualifications.

As you are aware on the vocational element of SQA qualifications construction is the largest portfolio. However, the insistence of a portfolio of evidence from the workplace, makes the qualification difficult to achieve for many employers together with the fact that it requires observational evidence to accomplish, this makes the qualification expensive for colleges to deliver and for employers to evidence in a timely manner. This is therefore an additional burden for all involved. The industry would like to see a halfway house between the old "Candidates record of work" (CREW) and the current burdensome portfolio.

We opine that doing the unit work in college and then having to undertake the exact same work to the same standard in a workplace is entirely unnecessary. However, the current qualification does not allow this and SQA are not prepared to negotiate with this element with the industry.

#### **Colleges being entirely in charge of the apprenticeship and funding**

The industry is entirely against this proposal! This would move the responsibility for Scottish apprentices from our current managing agencies to the colleges. Under a freedom of information request industry is advised that CITB are up to 46% better at delivering successful outcomes than the combined, currently fully funded colleges, therefore to interfere with this would in our opinion have a detrimental effect on successful outcomes going forward.

At present CITB (Scotland) augments the current apprentice funding with almost £30 million per annum which is something which we see no other sector doing. To interfere with this would be perilous and fraught with all kinds of unintended consequences.

There is also the argument that fully funding the college sector is only kicking the can a few years down the road and colleges will soon be back in the same position in a few years time when the current funding has been fully utilised by them, through constantly variable and increased costs and a static income.

A more considered approach may to fully fund CITB and make them responsible and answerable to the Scottish Government.

Colleges are fully funded on input not output, after 6 weeks of candidate attendance. Colleges can further claim the completion grant, on successful candidate completion. They are then able to report on only those candidates who stay the duration and successfully complete the qualification.

### **Qualifications**

Parents are at a loss to understand the current qualifications system as it affects construction apprentices.

They understand Academic Qualifications and degrees however telling parent their offspring can attain an SCQF 6 leaves them less inclined to include construction as a consideration for their child's career.

Whilst a degree course and a Scottish Construction apprenticeship both last 4 years perhaps we should consider Vocational Construction Degrees which would be an easier sell to parents and candidates.

### **Funding**

Whilst the Government takes proper credit for maintaining 25000 apprentices per year it without doubt spreads available funding too widely.

We all want a better Scotland providing government with a surplus which it is able to spend on required but expensive services, perhaps in these times of economic hardship the Government should be allocating more funding to those areas which drive the economy and provide larger portions of GDP. History proves that governments use construction to drive out of recession. This being the case for every construction job we benefit from several outwith construction ie Forestry, Steelmaking, Finance, Hospitality, Banking and finance, software, etc. It's an important point to ponder.

There is a mismatch in academic and vocational funding which automatically causes a hierarchical position between the two and alters the opinion of parents and candidates.