

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sue Webber MSP
Convener
Education, Children and Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Email: ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

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Dear Convener,

Thank you for the committee's letter of 01 June to provide the Education, Children and Young People Committee with further information before my appearance on 21 June.

I am providing the Committee with some further detail on the following issues raised in the committee letter:

1. *In its Programme for Government 2021-22, the Scottish Government pledged to “develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to re-secure Scotland’s access to the Erasmus + Programme” (p 46). Can you clarify what work has been undertaken to date to establish a Scottish Education Exchange Programme?*

SG officials have engaged with policy colleagues and partners from across the education sector to scope out a range of options for a bespoke Scottish programme. We are also reviewing the impact of the UK Government's Turing Scheme. This preparatory work will ensure that a future Scottish programme will help address gaps created by the UK Government's decision to leave Erasmus+.

2. *Although only established last year, the education exchange scheme in Wales, Taith, already appears to be operating successfully. As such, it may provide a useful model for a future Scottish scheme. The Committee is aware that there has been some interaction between Taith and Scottish Government officials. Can you provide an update on this?*

The Welsh Taith Scheme was established in 2021 with £65m of Welsh government funding. Their first exchanges took place in from 2022-23. SG officials regularly engaged with Taith operational leads until summer 2021 as the Taith was being set up to ask questions and learn from their process. Since then, SG officials have kept in regular contact on the progress of Taith through monthly catch-up meetings with Welsh and Northern Ireland officials.

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The Scottish Government will use the learning from our engagement with the Welsh Government and Taith to support the development of a Scottish exchange programme.

3. *What assessment has been made of the cost of establishing a Scottish Education Exchange Programme?*

Modelling for a Scottish Education Exchange programme was conducted by Scottish Government economists in Spring 2022. These assessments will help inform the scope and scale of a Scottish exchange programme.

4. *Has the Scottish Government piloted any international learning exchange schemes to date to inform the development of SEEP? If so, please provide further details.*

Scottish Government is considering the benefits of running a pilot scheme to help inform future approaches.

5. *How would SEEP guarantee two-way movement to ensure that Scottish students can benefit from experiences overseas but also that Scotland attracts overseas students?*

In preparing for a future scheme, SG will work with partners across the sector to consider their experience of international exchanges, including attracting overseas students to study in Scotland.

6. *Which governance structures do you envisage being put in place to ensure the operation of SEEP is appropriately managed?*

Scottish Government is planning to work with partners across the sector to consider options for appropriate governance and management of a future Scottish Programme. We will also consider learning from our engagement with the Department for Education and Welsh Government.

7. *What is the timeline for SEEP's introduction and why has it not been introduced before now?*

In its Programme for Government 2021-22, the Scottish Government pledged to “develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to re-secure Scotland’s access to the Erasmus + Programme”. We will work as quickly as possible to provide certainty to partners on the timetable for delivery of this commitment.

I look forward to further discussion on The Scottish Education Exchange Programme with the committee on 21 June.

GRAEME DEY MSP

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

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