

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

The Convenor  
Education, Children and Young People Committee  
[ecyp.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:ecyp.committee@parliament.scot)

19 May 2023

Dear Convenor

Thank-you for the invitation to provide the Education, Children and Young People Committee with an update on the Scottish Education Exchange Programme. Unfortunately, I am scheduled to be in the Isle of Wight representing the Scottish Government at an intergovernmental event on 24th May 2023. I have therefore provided an update on this and associated work, and I look forward to having an opportunity to discuss matters at a future committee meeting.

Scotland has a vibrant culture, cutting edge innovation and a world-renowned reputation for providing a warm, friendly, and open welcome to everyone. Our international students and the opportunities afforded by Erasmus+ have benefitted both Scotland and the European Union. It is therefore deeply regrettable that the UK Government decided not to participate in Erasmus+, which also prevents Scotland from participating in its own right.

Erasmus + had a major impact in Scotland, with proportionally more students from Scotland taking part in Erasmus than from any other country in the UK. In the academic year 2021/22 more than 82,000 students from over 180 different countries came to study at Scottish universities, which means that international students made up nearly a quarter of the total student population. Scotland also has the highest percentage (24%) of international and EU students of any of the four UK nations.

While these trends demonstrate that Scotland remains a strong international study destination, since the UK's EU exit and subsequent withdrawal from the Erasmus+ programme the number of EU Entrants to Scottish HE institutions has dropped. In 2021/2022 the number was 4,515, a drop of 45% from the previous year.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

The UK Government has now introduced the Turing Scheme as a replacement for the Erasmus+ programme. The Turing Scheme fails to match the breadth and scope of Erasmus+. It offers no provision for inward mobility to the UK, nor does it offer any provision for staff inward or outward mobility. The Turing Scheme focuses on supporting outward mobility from UK institutions to host institutions (EU and non-EU). As there are no formal arrangements with other countries, Turing relies upon individual institutions to establish their own arrangements for reciprocal exchanges from outside the UK to their institution.

The performance and impact of the UK Government Turing Scheme is difficult to determine, including the progress being made by individual institutions to establish their own arrangements for reciprocal student exchanges from overseas institutions. We continue to monitor the impact of the Turing scheme and engage with the Scottish Education sector and UK Government to ensure that Turing better reflect the needs of Scotland.

Following the UK Government decision to withdraw from Erasmus+, the Scottish Government stated in its 2021-22 Programme for Government its intention to introduce a Scottish Education Exchange Programme. We have engaged with stakeholders from across the education sector, including higher and further education, schools (including early years and care), vocational education and training, youth work, adult education, and sports. We are listening to the sectors and the needs of their learners and staff to ensure we create a programme fit for Scotland.

Drawing on our extensive engagement with stakeholders, our focus is increasingly on addressing the gaps in the Turing scheme, including in areas such as the participation of youth programmes, adult learners, and community learning. On dealing with the fundamental flaw in the Turing scheme, which is the lack of a multinational framework and the resulting impact on opportunities for students from the EU to benefit from studying in Scotland, we continue to explore options to support the vital bilateral exchange arrangements between educational institutions.

At the same time, we have been consulting on the development of the Purpose and Principles for post-school education, research, and skills, alongside our priorities for the wider education and skills system. These will be informed by a series of independent yet interrelated reviews that are due to publish shortly, including the National Discussion on education, review of the Skills Delivery Landscape being taken forward by James Withers and the Review of Qualifications and Assessment being led by Professor Louise Hayward.

Together, this work will help frame all our education priorities, including our next steps for enhancing Scotland's international profile and opportunities for studying here and overseas. This will include consideration of the future action we will take to fulfil our Programme for Government commitment to establish a Scottish International Exchange Programme, alongside our wider international Education priorities.

We will also continue to build on existing action such as the destination Scotland partnership that brings together the collective communications effort of the Scottish Government and key partners, including VisitScotland, Scottish Development International, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Creative Scotland, and Scotland Food & Drink, to harness our energy, expertise, and resources, increasing the impact of Scotland's global reputation.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver



I look forward to discussing these matters further with the committee at a future meeting.

**Graeme Dey MSP**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver

