



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 17th January 2017

SP Paper 59

2nd Report, 2017 (Session 5)

Web

Education and Skills Committee

Performance and Role of Key Education and Skills Bodies



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Education and Skills Committee

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Education and Skills Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.



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Executive Summary

The Committee has made a number of conclusions and recommendations in this report and they are drawn together and reproduced below. For ease of reference and navigation, the recommendations are grouped under the headings of the sections in which they appear in the main body of the report.

Introduction

1. The Committee wishes to highlight the impact and credibility of evidence where frontline staff can express themselves with candour. The Committee thanks everyone who took the time to contribute to the Committee's work and in particular highlights to Parliament the impact and influence of anonymous evidence, be it written submissions or survey responses, from frontline staff such as teachers.
2. The Committee is concerned that teachers may feel inhibited from 'expressing critical and independent views' as suggested by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The Committee is determined that it should have access to the candid views of teachers and front-line staff who have valuable contributions to make to its scrutiny.
3. It is disappointing that one Member of the Committee's access to teachers was restricted by an education authority.
4. Having reaped valuable evidence through a variety of anonymous means, the Committee will use this model for future scrutiny and thanks teachers again for their input on this occasion.

Skills Development Scotland

5. The Committee is not convinced that SDS's national programmes have enough flexibility to maximise their effectiveness in some regions. The Committee seeks an assessment from SDS on how it meets the needs of rural areas.
6. The Committee urges SDS to ensure that national programmes have the capacity to adapt to local circumstance and that regional staff are empowered to work with local stakeholders and businesses to tailor SDS's services. The Committee requests the Scottish Government take account of the concerns raised about SDS's reach beyond the Central Belt in its Enterprise and Skills Review.

7. The Committee is encouraged that SDS engaged with constructive feedback in its supplementary evidence, but was struck by its defensiveness during evidence taking. The Committee would encourage SDS to continue engaging with the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and others at a local level in a positive manner to seek to establish the specific ways in which local engagement could improve.
8. The Committee understands that there are a number of external and societal issues that affect the equalities impact of SDS's work. However, the SDS appeared to minimise its own role in delivering on the equality agenda for its own programmes. The Committee urges SDS to ensure that its programmes are accessible and attractive to all of Scotland's young people. The Committee recommends that SDS should commit to undertaking, as a matter of urgency, an Equalities Impact Assessment on all of its programmes.
9. The Committee notes the quality and quantity of data SDS produces. However, too much information may make it difficult for partners to understand what constitutes success at the national, sectoral, regional and local levels. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to consider how SDS can turn performance data into easily understood key performance indicators and broader outcome measures so that it can be held accountable for its performance at each of those levels.

Scottish Funding Council

10. The Committee highlights the importance of the SFC being able to demonstrate to its Board, and by extension universities and other stakeholders, that it continues to develop policy and initiate policy itself, as well as developing policy collectively with others. The Committee would be concerned if this policy development role has diminished, as Universities Scotland suggests. Where the SFC is initiating policy, it should ensure that stakeholders are aware of these instances to aid transparency and therefore accountability. The Committee suggests that the SFC engages separately with Universities Scotland to address its concerns in these areas.
11. The Committee welcomes the focus the SFC has on outcomes and the collaborative approach of the SFC with institutions to deliver through the outcome agreement process.

12. The Committee notes the SFC's contention that the outcome agreement process continues and anticipates the SFC being able to devote more resource to strategic leadership of the college and university sectors. The Committee notes that the Enterprise and Skills Review may alter the structure of the SFC; nonetheless, the Committee will seek evidence of such a shift when it considers the work of the SFC (or its successor body) over the course of the session.
13. The Committee recommends that the SFC undertake work to better understand the reasons why students do not complete college courses, especially further education courses, as there is a gap in the available data in this area. In doing so, the SFC should be mindful of the administrative burden of data collection on colleges.
14. The way in which colleges present accounts in relation to depreciation is unclear and therefore hampers the accountability and transparency of college spending. The Committee supports the Auditor General's recommendation that the SFC and Scottish Government introduce a better approach to allocating depreciation budgets to colleges.
15. The Committee notes the Auditor General for Scotland's concern that the college merger programme lacked baseline data to evaluate its efficacy.
16. The Committee appreciates the SFC's engagement with the issue of the turnover of highly qualified agency staff delivering vocational courses during its evidence session and asks it to undertake further work to assess the reasons for this turnover and the extent of this issue across colleges.
17. The Committee is concerned by the Government's intentions to pursue the Phase 1 recommendation of the Enterprise and Skills Review to create an overarching board for enterprise and skills agencies when it has not seen the evidence to justify the abolition of the SFC Board.
18. Given the Committee's interest in the learner journey, the Committee awaits the Phase 2 findings of the Review on this with interest.
19. The Committee recognises the importance of a body undertaking the functions of the SFC. The Committee is particularly concerned that any reform does not risk universities being reclassified as public bodies and will continue to scrutinise the Enterprise and Skills review as it progresses.
20. The Committee is also concerned that there are areas directly impacted upon by the Review recommendation relating to the SFC that are deemed outwith the scope of the Review, for example in relation to widening access. The Committee recommends that the Government sets out, in advance of Phase 2 findings, what it considers the impact of the review will be on issues outwith the Review's scope.

21. The Committee raised a number of issues on the process followed by the Review with both the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The Committee emphasises again to the Government the importance of being able to demonstrate a clear evidence base for Phase 2 recommendations, including if it pursues the Phase 1 recommendation to abolish the SFC board.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

22. The evidence the Committee has received from teachers should give the SQA serious cause for concern. The Committee considers that the distinction in feedback between the Committee's survey and the SQA commissioned survey is perhaps indicative of the current relationship with teachers. There would appear to be a divergence between what teachers will express to the SQA and what they will express to this Committee. The SQA is invited to review its approach to engaging with teachers to enable candid communication from those with criticisms to make. The SQA also needs to be able to demonstrate how these views impact on the SQA's processes in order to improve trust.
23. The Committee will monitor the performance of the SQA throughout this session of Parliament. The Committee expects to see evidence of speedy improvements in the design, delivery, supporting documentation, and marking of national qualifications.
24. The SQA's position on the design of the new Curriculum for Excellence qualifications appears to be that they were given a brief and a timescale that has been met and that many of the problems experienced have been caused by a disconnect between the principles of Curriculum for Excellence and how education is delivered in some schools, with some possibly preferring an "off-the-shelf" curriculum.
25. The Committee has agreed to undertake more work on the accountability for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and in particular the senior phase. However, even if the SQA's position were hypothetically to be accepted, the Committee would still find it difficult to understand how the SQA has fulfilled its role to its core customers, the learners of Scotland, having produced qualifications that have led to an onerous workload, a breakdown in trust and threats of industrial action by teachers.
26. SQA is a member of the Curriculum for Excellence management Board and has a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. SQA should be proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the broader development of Curriculum for Excellence.

27. Accountability for the overall design brief of Curriculum for Excellence qualifications is unclear but the responsibility for communicating those changes lies squarely with the SQA. The delivery of the new qualifications was not a surprise and the SQA should have been prepared and had the capacity to communicate effectively from the beginning. The Committee accepts that the structure of Scottish Education is diffuse, however good planning and the ability to produce documents that are easy to use by the intended audience are capacities the Committee expects of every public body.
28. The SQA's core business is producing and marking exams. Errors in these areas are unacceptable. The Committee is concerned that Dr Brown suggests that errors occur because of excessive workload and has presented the solution as being more work on quality assurance. The Committee therefore urges the SQA to consider how to re-prioritise resources to address such issues and fulfil its core functions.
29. The Committee asks that the SQA ensures that it improves its data collection from chief invigilators so that it is in a position to categorically state that all of the people it appoints receive the living wage. Alternatively, the SQA should review standard terms and conditions for employment of invigilators to create a system where invigilators receive a minimum wage as standard. The Committee requests an update from the SQA on this before the exam diet this May.
30. The SQA needs to develop updated Curriculum for Excellence qualifications and, importantly, communicate any changes to the teaching profession in the short timeframe available. This will require the SQA to improve in several areas while under considerable time pressure. The Committee urges the SQA, local authorities, Education Scotland and teaching representative bodies to have a clear focus on how teachers will be given the time and resource to understand what is expected from teachers and learners. The Committee would welcome regular updates on this work.
31. The Committee is aware that the SQA has a long term aim to make the SQA self-financing.¹ It does not appear that this aim is likely to occur in the near future without significant costs being passed on to other parts of the public sector. The Committee seeks assurance and evidence from the SQA that its commercial work is not diluting its focus on its core business.

Education Scotland

32. The evidence from Dr Maxwell suggested that the lines of accountability in relation to Education Scotland's roles in advising the Scottish Government, driving policy and the inspection regime should be clearer and require further investigation by this Committee.
33. More broadly, the Committee needs clarity as to who is the decision taker or the clear lead in the different areas of the development and delivery of Curriculum for Excellence. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's undertaking to look at this issue and the Committee has also decided to undertake further work in this area which can inform the Cabinet Secretary's deliberations on the need for change.
34. Education Scotland is a member of the Curriculum for Excellence management Board and has a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of Curriculum for Excellence. Education Scotland should be proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the broad development of Curriculum for Excellence.
35. The role of Education Scotland is being considered as part of the Scottish Government's Education Governance Review. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government takes account of the evidence the Committee has received, and the resulting findings, on the role of Education Scotland and the performance of the SQA in considering how to proceed.
36. Having raised the specific issues detailed in evidence in relation to the dual role of Education Scotland with the body and the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee will consider this matter further as part of its pre-legislative scrutiny. This scrutiny will include consideration of the appropriate roles of both Education Scotland and the SQA in education in future.
37. The Committee considers that when setting out on a programme of reform, clear outcome-based baseline data should be collected to allow measurement of the effectiveness of the reform as it is rolled out. The Committee is keen that this lesson be learnt for any future reform. The Committee regrets that the opportunity for this to be done for Curriculum for Excellence has now passed. The Committee urges Education Scotland and the Scottish Government to consider what can be done to address the consequences of this.
38. The Committee welcomes plans for evidence based research on the delivery and efficacy of Curriculum for Excellence and looks forward to the research influencing policy development. The Committee is also interested in the forthcoming analysis of inspection trends and particularly how that document will evaluate the curriculum.

39. In the context of Education Scotland's assertion that inspections provide evidence of the impact of Curriculum for Excellence, the Committee is concerned that the number of inspections appeared to be reducing. The Committee urges Education Scotland to ensure that it is carrying out this core function regularly to support schools, local authorities and the national bodies in delivering Curriculum for Excellence.
40. The Committee believes it is vital that inspectors are able to understand how a school operates under normal circumstances and provide constructive feedback. The Committee is therefore concerned that inspections may lead to a change in the normal running of schools, creating additional work and potentially a false impression. The Committee welcomes Education Scotland's plans to correct misconceptions about what inspections entail. The Committee urges Education Scotland to work with local authorities and directly with schools to challenge these misconceptions.
41. The Committee notes the importance of the quality assurance provided by local authorities and schools themselves. The Committee also welcomes Education Scotland developing a broader suite of inspections.
42. The Committee welcomes the review and reduction of the level of documentation on Curriculum for Excellence but suggests that there will be more work to be done to ensure that the guidance is accessible, clear and is easily usable. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's action since May 2016 in dealing with the 20,000 pages of changing guidance issued by Education Scotland on Curriculum for Excellence which as a whole has placed an unnecessary burden on the teaching profession.
43. The Committee invites Education Scotland to set out more clearly the specifics of its financial planning processes to enable the Committee to give this more forensic scrutiny in future years. Clear and transparent financial planning will become increasingly important given it has a more limited budget in the coming financial year.

Education authorities

44. COSLA is a member of the Curriculum for Excellence management Board and its members, as the statutory bodies for education, have a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of Curriculum for Excellence so COSLA should be much more proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the development of guidance and advice for teachers.
45. The Committee considers that COSLA has a crucial role in the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and it is not clear to the Committee how it is delivering this.

46. In turn, education authorities are the overarching guardians of teacher workload, as well as for the wellbeing of the school workforce, and so have the primary responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the impact of guidance and advice and feed concerns up to Board level, as well as act on these at local level.
47. The variation in performance of education authorities is concerning. Education authorities should collaborate more effectively to share best practice. Those authorities currently with performance challenges should take the necessary steps to address these, including taking up the offer of support from the Accounts Commission. The Committee intends to continue to monitor this.

Introduction

1. The Committee undertook scrutiny of four public bodies that have national responsibilities to deliver outcomes in education and skills policy areas and had evidence sessions with each one in November 2016. The four bodies considered were:
 - Skills Development Scotland (“SDS”);
 - Scottish Funding Council (“SFC”);
 - Scottish Qualifications Authority (“SQA”); and
 - Education Scotland.
2. The Committee held an evidence session with representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (“COSLA”) and the Scottish Local Government Partnership (“SLGP”), on 14 December 2016 on local authorities’ delivery of education.² The Committee also held an evidence session with Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work on 7 December 2016 in relation to the Enterprise and Skills Review.³

Scrutiny of the public bodies

3. The Committee decided to continue the scrutiny of the bodies the Education and Culture Committee looked at in 2015. The Committee was also mindful of the sizable budgets of these organisations and their importance in taking forward the Scottish Government’s policies and priorities. Furthermore, each of the bodies’ role and governance is currently being reviewed; SDS and the SFC are being reviewed under the Scottish Government’s Enterprise and Skills review⁴ and the roles of the SQA and Education Scotland are part of the Scottish Government’s Education Governance Review⁵.
4. The original intention was that the scrutiny of these bodies would inform the Committee’s work on the Draft Budget 2017-18. While the preparatory work was helpful to the Committee’s scrutiny of the Draft Budget, the themes that arose from the work on the public bodies were significant and broader than financial scrutiny. The Committee therefore decided to publish this report on its scrutiny of the four public bodies and local authorities separately. The Committee’s Draft Budget report will draw upon this work as well.
5. This report will consider the performance of the four public bodies and also reflect on the evidence it has heard from local authority representatives and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work on the Enterprise and Skills Review and its impact on the SFC. It also draws from an evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on 21 December 2016, when John

Swinney MSP answered questions on the Draft Budget and the performance of the four bodies.

Evidence gathering

6. The Committee wrote to each of the four bodies in September asking them to set out how their performance and strategy supports the Scottish Government's priorities and has a positive impact on outcomes.
7. The Committee wrote directly to a number of stakeholders for each of the bodies and sought the views of the users of the bodies' services.
8. To this end, the Committee launched four online surveys seeking views on the bodies' delivery of key outcomes and a report summarising the results of those surveys was published on 3 November 2016⁶. The Committee agreed to accept anonymous submissions from individuals to encourage the free expression of views.
9. Members of the Committee held meetings with the public bodies that were scrutinised. The Convener, James Dornan MSP, and Ross Greer MSP also held a meeting with teachers who attended a continuous professional development event at the Scottish Parliament (organised by the Parliament's Outreach and Education department) and discussed the performance of the SQA and Education Scotland.
10. The Committee's aim was to gather a variety of views from academics, stakeholders, service users and others to inform its scrutiny. The Committee was successful and particularly so in respect of the SQA and Education Scotland.
11. It is notable how many teachers chose to submit anonymous submissions. In December 2016, the Royal Society of Edinburgh reported a "concern that a culture of compliance and conformity in Scottish education inhibits head teachers and teachers from expressing critical and independent views".⁷ One of the Committee members, when seeking to meet teachers in his local area on behalf of the Committee to hear their practical experiences, appeared to have been refused access by his local education authority,^{8,9} although the local authority disputes this¹⁰. The Committee is mindful that the delivery of education can be highly political at all levels of government and it is in this context that the Committee decided to accept anonymous submissions, hold a session with teachers in the Parliament, and undertake an online survey.
12. The Committee's conclusions are in part based on its survey and informal meeting with teachers on SQA and Education Scotland. The themes from this work aligned with, and were further substantiated by, anonymous submissions from teachers and evidence from academics and organisations. Such consistent themes across different forms of evidence demonstrated that the concerns were extremely credible.

13. The Committee wishes to highlight the impact and credibility of evidence where frontline staff can express themselves with candour. The Committee thanks everyone who took the time to contribute to the Committee's work and in particular highlights to Parliament the impact and influence of anonymous evidence, be it written submissions or survey responses, from frontline staff such as teachers.
14. The Committee is concerned that teachers may feel inhibited from 'expressing critical and independent views' as suggested by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The Committee is determined that it should have access to the candid views of teachers and front-line staff who have valuable contributions to make to its scrutiny.
15. It is disappointing that one Member of the Committee's access to teachers appeared to be restricted by an education authority.
16. Having reaped valuable evidence through a variety of anonymous means, the Committee will use this model for future scrutiny and thanks teachers again for their input on this occasion.

Next steps

Debate

17. Due to the strength of evidence received, the Committee agreed to hold a debate in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament on the performance of SDS, the SFC, SQA and Education Scotland. The debate took place on 12 January 2016 and the Official Report is available here:
<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10726&mode=pdf>
(Cols 49-108)

Evidence session on Curriculum for Excellence

18. During the course of its work the Committee found that there is confusion regarding the demarcation of roles and delivery of Curriculum for Excellence ("CfE") were unclear. The Committee has decided to undertake more work on this, starting with an evidence session with the CfE Management Board and other key committees on 18 January 2016, who have this responsibility.
19. The Committee is also keen to understand what the senior phase of CfE has meant in practice and will be gathering evidence on its impact across Scotland including canvassing Education Authorities and Higher Education Institutions on the perceived narrowing of subject choices in some areas.
20. The Committee will then scrutinise any legislation arising from the Scottish Government's Education Governance Review including undertaking pre-legislative scrutiny.

Scrutiny of Public Bodies

Skills Development Scotland

Summary

21. The Committee welcomes Skills Development Scotland's ("SDS") focus on outcomes and its performance in delivering Modern Apprenticeships.
22. Evidence suggested that SDS's delivery in local areas should be better tailored to local needs.
23. The Committee raised concerns about the equalities impacts of SDS' programmes.

SDS's role

24. SDS is a non-departmental public body ("NDPB") and the national skills body for Scotland. Among its functions are:
 - the management and administration of Scottish Government-funded training and employability programmes such as the Modern Apprenticeship programme and the Employability Fund;
 - the provision of Career Information, Advice and Guidance - for example through the advice in schools and SDS centres and the 'My World of Work' web service; and
 - working with partners to formulate Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments which aim to assess skills demands now and in the future.
25. SDS's total income for 2016/17 is £208m, of which £176m is 'Grant-in Aid' funding from the Scottish Government.¹¹
26. SDS's annual plans are informed by the Letter of Guidance written by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills¹² which includes a range of targets and actions.
27. The SDS's submission to the Committee outlined how its strategies and goals align with national outcomes and the Committee notes that these measures are under development. The submission also described how it measures impact and outcomes of its programmes through a number of quantitative and qualitative means. SDS also explained its system based approach to strategy, which takes account of the whole system, rather only focusing on what it produces.¹³

Issues raised by the Committee

28. The Committee took evidence from SDS on 9 November 2016. A number of Members had visited local offices or projects in the fortnight leading up to the evidence session. The Committee thanks SDS for facilitating these visits.
29. The main issues raised by the Committee in the evidence session were: the adaptability of SDS's services to local need; equalities issues; and how SDS measures its impact.

Localised Service Provision

30. From the SDS's submission, it is clear that there is a strategic focus on providing services at a number of levels. The SDS describes its four "delivery platforms" as: National, Sectoral, Regional, and Highly Localised. SDS's submission states:

” Partnership and collaboration are fundamental to what we do, key to making the Skills Planning Model a reality and making public services work better for customers more generally. As a national organisation with a firm presence in communities across Scotland, our delivery platform flexes according to partnership purpose.¹⁴

31. In relation to its Career Information Advice and Guidance ("CIAG") service, Danny Logue, Operations Director of SDS, said:

” Every year, our careers advisers negotiate a school partnership agreement with all 364 secondary schools.¹⁵

32. The SDS's submission explained how it works at a regional level with examples from the work it undertakes in Glasgow.

” We work closely with the Glasgow Colleges Regional Board and the three Glasgow colleges and support the work of DYW Glasgow, which is hosted by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and established to develop industry links with education.¹⁶

33. However, a number of submissions from key local stakeholders suggested that some services offered by SDS were not sufficiently locally focused. Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, the Scottish Branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers ("SOLACE") and the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group ("SLAED") all suggested that SDS's offer could be better adapted to local need in some areas. SLAED stated:

” Some councils feel that SDS is very centralist with rural areas feeling excluded or lagging behind. This is a particular issue for outlying areas where service delivery is quite distinct from other areas.¹⁷

34. SLAED argued that there should be more collaboration and better sharing of information between SDS and local authorities to ensure that there is less duplication.¹⁸ SOLACE called for more clarity of the role of skills agencies at national, regional and local levels and suggested that national programmes should be adaptable to local circumstance.¹⁹
35. Some of these concerns were put to SDS directly by the Committee. The Committee was struck by how defensively SDS rejected criticism by, in particular, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. The Committee contrasts the narrative in SDS' submission of partnership being a fundamental part of its function and the way that concerns from a key local partner were initially rejected.
36. The Committee wrote to SDS shortly after its evidence session with the Committee and asked SDS to reflect on this issue. The SDS provided a response on 12 December 2016.²⁰ It provided responses to many of the concerns raised to the Committee and set out how its policies should allow for regional flexibility. SDS also indicated that it would engage with those partners that had raised concerns.
37. As Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce's submission was highlighted a number of times during the Committee meeting on 9 November 2016, the Committee asked whether it would like to make any further comment. The Chamber stressed that it values its good relationship with SDS. It said:



[Our comments] were made with a view to providing constructive feedback and pointing out the opportunities and challenges unique to the North-east of Scotland. Acting as a critical friend is a core role for us as a membership organisation representing the business community.

38. The Committee is not convinced that SDS's national programmes have enough flexibility to maximise their effectiveness in some regions. The Committee seeks an assessment from SDS on how it meets the needs of rural areas.
39. The Committee urges SDS to ensure that national programmes have the capacity to adapt to local circumstance and that regional staff are empowered to work with local stakeholders and businesses to tailor SDS's services. The Committee requests the Scottish Government take account of the concerns raised about SDS's reach beyond the Central Belt in its Enterprise and Skills Review.
40. The Committee is encouraged that SDS engaged with constructive feedback in its supplementary evidence, but was struck by its defensiveness during evidence taking. The Committee would encourage SDS to continue engaging with AGCC and others at a local level in a positive manner to seek to establish the specific ways in which local engagement could improve.

Equalities issues

41. The Committee was keen to explore equalities issues in relation to the delivery of modern apprenticeships.
42. The final report of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce²¹ noted a number of issues in regard to gender stereotyping and the outcomes for young people from black and minority ethnic communities, young people with disabilities, and care leavers.
43. The Commission recommended that SDS published an Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships, which it did in December 2015.²² One of the actions demanded of SDS in its ministerial letter of guidance this year is to implement that plan.
44. The Commission also recommended that careers advice should be used to combat social norms and widen young people's horizons. The SDS's submission highlights its targeted Careers Information, Advice and Guidance ("CIAG") in schools as an example of early intervention to promote a range of positive outcomes, including the reduction of inequality.²³
45. The SCVO however, stated that the occupational segregation remains a "constant feature of skills intervention programmes".²⁴ The SCVO suggested that the SDS should call upon the expertise of the third sector in the design and delivery of its programmes. The SCVO highlighted the following statistics:

” Only 3.9% of apprenticeship starts in Scotland in 2015/6 were disabled and women account for only 5% of engineering apprenticeship starts. In 2015/16, 74% of MA frameworks had a gender balance of 75:25 or worse.

46. Katie Hutton, Director of National Training Programmes, described how SDS has worked with a number of partners to improve uptake of Modern Apprenticeships of underrepresented groups. She reported that the number of individuals self-declaring as having a disability is improving as is, to a lesser extent, the number of Modern Apprenticeships being taken up by individuals from Black and Ethnic Minority Groups. SDS stated that they rely to an extent on employers, training providers and other to take action on the equalities agenda. Ms Hutton also suggested that the self-reported nature of disability is an issue, implying that it is possible that SDS's statistics are under-reporting the number of individuals on Modern Apprenticeships.²⁵
47. In relation to occupational segregation in science and engineering careers and modern apprenticeships, Damien Yeates, Chief Executive of SDS, suggested that the issue is largely societal. He said:

” The problem is young women's perception and beliefs that it is not a sector that they are interested in, that they do not value it or that somehow their

formative education or the influences on their life suggest that it is not for them. It is very deep seated.²⁶

48. Mr Yeates stated that there may also be gender imbalances elsewhere. He cited medicine, where more young women than men are taking courses in higher education.²⁷ He also stated:

” I find it difficult to work out how we would somehow split how the funds are spent by gender.²⁸

49. Ms Hutton suggested employers would not be in favour of SDS telling them whom to recruit.²⁹ She also stated:

” That gets into the legalities of whom we choose to give money to for recruitment. There are some legal issues around our being disproportionately proactive with one particular group in recruitment.³⁰

50. Members of the Committee highlighted during this discussion that, although Modern Apprenticeships rely on employers creating the associated jobs, and this is outwith Government control, public money is also being used to part-fund the training element of apprenticeships. It was suggested that this public funding should carry leverage, and this leverage can be used to ensure equalities issues are a key consideration when SDS is exploring new apprenticeship opportunities with employers.³¹

51. The Committee explored whether targeting additional modern apprenticeships with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (“STEM”) may have an equalities impact specifically whether it made it more likely for men than women to get apprenticeships. Mr Yeates confirmed that “Gender segregation is more pronounced in engineering” and said:

” If everything remains as it is, that could exacerbate the issues in relation to the equalities agenda. That is why we all have to work doubly hard to ensure that there is progress across the breadth of the STEM areas.³²

52. The Committee understands that there are a number of external and societal issues that affect the equalities impact of SDS’s work. However, the SDS appeared to minimise its own role in delivering on the equality agenda for its own programmes. The Committee urges SDS to ensure that its programmes are accessible and attractive to all of Scotland’s young people. The Committee recommends that SDS should commit to undertaking, as a matter of urgency, an Equalities Impact Assessment on all of its programmes.

Measuring impact

53. As noted above, the SDS submission provided details of a number of indicators that it uses to measure its impact. The measures indicate that SDS is delivering on the activity targets expected of it. The Committee is pleased that SDS continues to meet Modern Apprenticeship starts targets.
54. In oral evidence, SDS explained that it is working with the OECD on a project to measure long-term outcomes by linking a number of public sector data sets. SDS also quoted a report by external consultants that lauded the quality of SDS's data and argued that SDS has a great deal of information on performance.³³ Mr Yeates said:

” I could reverse a truck to put reports and evaluations on your desk.³⁴

55. Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce argued that the performance of SDS should be measured using simplified key performance indicators. It continued:

” SDS needs to be held accountable to outcomes and not activity measures. These outcomes should include:
Economic growth;
Productivity;
Unemployment.³⁵

56. The Chamber stated that if activity measures are to be used then broad indicators should be used as part of a “balanced scorecard approach” along with measures of satisfaction levels. SDS indicated that it internally uses such an approach and would consider publishing that information.³⁶
57. Other organisations highlighted the continuing need for SDS to focus on outcomes and quality of its programmes. For example, CBI Scotland said SDS should:

” Focus on quality as well as quantity as apprenticeship programmes continue to develop.³⁷

58. The Committee's follow up letter to SDS sought clarification on that point. The SDS indicated in its response that it would look at how it presents its information and that the types of information it publishes on its performance would, taken together, form a balanced scorecard.³⁸

59. The Committee notes the quality and quantity of data SDS produces. However, too much information may make it difficult for partners to understand what constitutes success at the national, sectoral, regional and local levels. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to consider how SDS can turn performance data into easily understood key performance indicators and broader outcome measures so that it can be held accountable for its performance at each of those levels.

Scottish Funding Council

Summary

60. Scotland's university and college sectors make a hugely valuable contribution to Scottish society. The Scottish Funding Council ("SFC") is a significant funder of both sectors and contributes to the success and positive outcomes of colleges and universities.
61. The Committee raised concerns about the independence of the SFC and its role as an independent adviser to the Scottish Government.
62. The Committee also had some concerns about how colleges' budgets are presented and the outcomes for non-completers of further education courses.

SFC's role

63. The SFC is an NDPB established under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 from a merger of the former Scottish Further Education Funding Council and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. It is the national body responsible for funding 25 colleges and 19 higher education institutions ("HEIs") in order to enable them to "educate, build confidence, develop skills, encourage innovation and help to drive future economic growth."³⁹
64. The Scottish Government issues a number of letters of guidance to the SFC which set out the Government's high level strategic objectives for the university and college sectors.
65. Internally, the SFC is governed by a Board ("the Council Board"). The Council Board is responsible for governing the decisions and strategic direction of the SFC. Members of the Council Board are appointed by the Scottish Ministers with their role is to take "collective responsibility for the proper conduct of the Council's affairs."⁴⁰
66. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Scottish Ministers for the use of funding received from the Scottish Government and to the Scottish Parliament for ensuring that funds are used for the purposes they were given and in ways that comply with the conditions attached to them.
67. The SFC received a total of over £1.65 billion of income in financial year 2015-16. The majority (£1,628 million) came from the Scottish Government.
68. The largest share of the budget is for onward allocation to HEIs (over £1 billion) and colleges (over £500 million). The remaining funds (£7.9 million in 2014-15 and 2015-16 and £7.m million in 2016-17) goes to the operation of the SFC itself.

Issues raised by the Committee

69. The SFC appeared at the Committee on 16 November 2016. The week before, the SFC had arranged a visit to Queen Margaret University for Colin Beattie MSP and Liz Smith MSP where the members met with students who had articulated from a college into the university. The members also had an informal meeting with officials from the SFC. The Committee thanks the SFC for arranging the visit.
70. A number of aspects of the role of the SFC were explored by the Committee on 16 November: the SFC's distance from government and its role in policy development; jointly funding further and higher education; the SFC's role as both funder and regulator; and the conclusions of the Enterprise and Skills review. The Committee also explored a number of issues in respect of the college sector: how depreciation is presented in colleges' budgets; student retention; and capital investment.

Functions of the SFC

71. In its submission the SFC explained how the Outcome Agreement process with Universities and Colleges allow it to influence and measure progress against national outcomes. The SFC drew on evidence on the quality of teaching, positive destinations, and assessments of the quality of Scottish research to show that it is delivering positive outcomes.
72. The Committee received a number of submissions from stakeholders. Universities Scotland focused on the SFC's strategic leadership role and identified several instances where the SFC had added value (e.g. support for research pooling) as well as making some constructive criticisms.⁴¹ Universities Scotland suggested that the SFC:

“...is at its most effective when it is empowered to have a strategic role in the Scottish higher and further education sector and when the organisation provides constructive challenge to both Government and to institutions.”⁴²

73. The Committee considered how the SFC contributes to policy development and provides advice to ministers. Some Members were concerned that the SFC's advice is not routinely published and therefore that aspect of its role is not transparent. Some Members also expressed concern that SFC's policy positions are known only when they accord with and support the Government's position.
74. Dr John Kemp, Interim Chief Executive said policy development involves the SFC, the sectors and the Scottish Government working in partnership. In regard to the suggestion that its advice should be published, Dr Kemp said:

“...the suggestion that you make would change the nature of the advice we give to Government and would reduce the value of our body.”⁴³

75. The Royal Society of Edinburgh (“RSE”) was concerned that the Scottish Government had become too directive in its ministerial letters of guidance to the SFC. The RSE stated that “increasing intervention from Government has eroded [the] arms-length relationship” between the SFC and the Government.⁴⁴ Dr Kemp suggested that in his 16 years’ experience at the SFC the prescriptiveness of executives and governments had not significantly changed.⁴⁵ In response to a comment about the proximity of the SFC to the Government, Dr Kemp said:

” We exist not only to care for the system of colleges and universities but to ensure that they deliver on what [our] £1.6 billion-worth of public funding aims to provide.⁴⁶

76. The Committee was interested in whether the SFC prepares medium-term budgets. While the Auditor General stated that she understood that the SFC does not prepare medium to long term budgets, the SFC indicated that it does and provided more detail on its longer term financial planning in a follow up letter to the Committee. The SFC indicated that it normally projects its “main core grants ... over at least a four year period.”⁴⁷
77. The Auditor General also stated that she had “found that the SFC needs to do more to assess, and report on, the medium-to-long-term financial sustainability of the [higher education] sector.”⁴⁸ At a meeting of the Public Audit and Post Legislative Scrutiny Committee on 1 December 2016, Alastair Sim outlined some of the cost pressures faced by universities and stated that there is not currently a sustainable financial basis to support the sector.⁴⁹
78. Universities Scotland suggested that the SFC’s capacity to provide strategic leadership has been stretched with less operational funding and a focus on the outcome agreement process.⁵⁰
79. Dr Kemp disagreed with University Scotland’s suggestion and argued that the nature of the SFC’s work has changed with the introduction of outcome agreements. However, he admitted that developing outcome agreements attracted resources and had taken “a bit of bedding down”. Dr Kemp indicated that in the future the balance between focusing on outcome agreements and strategic work would change.⁵¹
80. Dr Kemp also cited the benefits of outcome agreements when discussing the SFC’s dual role as a regulator and funder of colleges. He argued that the day-to-day interaction and support, as a funding body, will in most cases provide the opportunity to “bring things back on track” if there were any regulatory issues.⁵²
81. Several respondents valued the SFC being jointly responsible for funding both colleges and HEIs. For example, NUS Scotland, stated:

” In Scotland, we have a distinctive tertiary sector, not least when we consider the amount of higher education activity delivered in colleges. It is for this reason – and the necessity to build that close working between

universities and colleges more in the years to come, particularly in response to the widening access and developing the young workforce agendas – that it is entirely right that we have a joint council, and it has delivered a large number of successes as a result.⁵³

82. The Committee received evidence from Universities Scotland to suggest that the policy advice function of the SFC has diminished in recent years:

” The SFC should have the capacity and confidence to initiate policy itself...this is the aspect of SFC's role that has diminished in recent years.⁵⁴

83. This was explored in evidence and the SFC responded:

” In recent years, some of the ways in which policy has been developed have involved the Government, the sectors and the funding council working together rather than separately coming up with solutions and then choosing one of them. That is a good way of developing policy.⁵⁵

84. The SFC later indicated it would be happy to work towards improving transparency, including working with the Committee or others.⁵⁶

85. The Committee highlights the importance of the SFC being able to demonstrate to its Board, and by extension universities and other stakeholders, that it continues to develop policy and initiate policy itself, as well as developing policy collectively with others. The Committee would be concerned if this policy development role has diminished, as Universities Scotland suggests. Where the SFC is initiating policy, it should ensure that stakeholders are aware of these instances to aid transparency and therefore accountability. The Committee suggests that the SFC engages separately with Universities Scotland to address its concerns in these areas.

86. The Committee welcomes the focus the SFC has on outcomes and the collaborative approach of the SFC with institutions to deliver through the outcome agreement process.

87. The Committee notes the SFC's contention that the outcome agreement process continues and anticipates the SFC being able to devote more resource to strategic leadership of the college and university sectors. The Committee notes that the Enterprise and Skills Review may alter the structure of the SFC; nonetheless, the Committee will seek evidence of such a shift when it considers the work of the SFC (or its successor body) over the course of the session.

Colleges

88. The Committee explored whether the way in which college places are funded – full funding is provided if a student fulfils a certain part of the course – means that

pastoral support is too focused on the early part of a course. Dr Kemp indicated that outcome agreements had shifted the focus onto outcomes and the success rate of students.⁵⁷

89. The Committee also raised the non-completion rate for further education (“FE”) courses, which is an issue the Committee has considered on a number of occasions. In a letter to the Committee of 1 December 2016, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills confirmed that the withdrawal rate from FE courses in 2014/15 was 25%.⁵⁸
90. The Committee also highlighted to the SFC concerns at the level of turnover of highly qualified agency staff delivering expertise in some colleges in particular vocational courses.⁵⁹
91. The Committee understands that learners may not complete courses for positive reasons, such as gaining employment, but it is important to be able to ascertain which individuals have less positive destinations, perhaps disengaging with education or other means of upskilling to achieve employment. Dr Kemp noted that it is difficult to track the destinations of students who do not complete courses and that it is important to do so. He suggested that without that data it is hard to evaluate why people do not complete courses and what action to take.⁶⁰
92. Another issue the Committee has considered on a number of occasions is the impact of college mergers. The Auditor General highlighted concerns she had raised in recent reports on the lack of baseline data to measure the impact and benefits of the merger programme and that:

 The SFC's recent report, ‘Impact and success of the programme of college mergers in Scotland’, included some of the costs of mergers but was incomplete, as it did not include the costs of harmonising staff pay and conditions for the colleges involved in mergers.⁶¹
93. Dr Kemp stated that the cost of pay harmonisation had become available and is £6.2 million. He set this figure against the savings presented in SFC’s evaluation of the merger programme⁶² which were £52 million.⁶³
94. The Committee explored the issue of how colleges’ budgets are presented. The treatment of depreciation (i.e. the fall in value of the colleges’ assets) causes a number of colleges to have a “technical deficit”, which can make it difficult for a lay person to understand the true financial position of colleges. The money that colleges can spend by going into “technical deficit” can usually only be spent on prescribed priorities: student support; repayment of loans; and costs of 2015-16 pay award.⁶⁴ The SFC confirmed that colleges may rely on current accounting practice to fund commitments in these areas.
95. The Committee wrote to the SFC and the Auditor General after the session to ask for clarification on why colleges’ accounts are presented in this way.⁶⁵ The SFC set out the practices and standards that colleges’ accounts must comply with. The

Auditor General noted that she had recommended that the SFC and the Scottish Government introduce a better approach to allocating depreciation budgets to colleges.⁶⁶

96. Another message that came from colleges was that the level of data returns required by the SFC is onerous.^{67,68}

97. The Committee recommends that the SFC undertake work to better understand the reasons why students do not complete college courses, especially further education courses, as there is a gap in the available data in this area. In doing so, the SFC should be mindful of the administrative burden of data collection on colleges.
98. The way in which colleges present accounts in relation to depreciation is unclear and therefore hampers the accountability and transparency of college spending. The Committee supports the Auditor General's recommendation that the SFC and Scottish Government introduce a better approach to allocating depreciation budgets to colleges.
99. The Committee notes the Auditor General for Scotland's concern that the college merger programme lacked baseline data to evaluate its efficacy.
100. The Committee appreciates the SFC's engagement with the issue of the turnover of highly qualified agency staff delivering vocational courses during its evidence session and asks it to undertake further work to assess the reasons for this turnover and the extent of this issue across colleges.

Enterprise and Skills review

101. The Committee asked about the impact of the Enterprise and Skills Review and the proposal of a single board for SDS, the SFC and the enterprise agencies. In particular, the SFC was asked whether a change in structure could risk the Office for National Statistics reclassifying HEIs as public bodies as had occurred in the college sector. Dr Kemp indicated that the status of the bodies was currently under consideration by the Office for National Statistics and that there are ways that this risk can be mitigated by managing the degree of government control of the bodies.⁶⁹ This issue, as well as the breadth of work for a single board for all enterprise and skills agencies were issues that Dr Kemp suggested would need to be considered in phase 2 of the review.⁷⁰
102. The Committee held an evidence session on the Enterprise and Skills Review with Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, on 7 December 2016.⁷¹ This was in part to ascertain the meaning of the recommendation in the Review Phase 1 report and how it would impact on the SFC and SDS. The recommendation states:

” To bring greater integration and focus to the delivery of our enterprise and skills support to businesses and users of the skills system, we will create a new Scotland-wide statutory board to co-ordinate the activities of HIE and SE, including SDI, SDS and the SFC.⁷²

103. The Committee wanted to clarify in particular whether the SFC board would remain with the addition of an overarching strategic body or whether the recommendation meant abolition of the SFC board. The Cabinet Secretary confirmed the SFC board would be abolished.⁷³
104. The SFC was established by the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005. The SFC’s Board is the “Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council” established by the 2005 Act. Abolition of the SFC’s board would therefore require changes to primary legislation.
105. Universities Scotland provided a submission setting out the specific functions of the SFC board and highlighting the importance of any replacement body protecting these functions.⁷⁴ The Committee sought to test the evidence base for the decision taken at ministerial level during Phase 1 to abolish the Scottish Funding Council board and other boards covered by the Review. The Committee asked for specific examples where stakeholders specifically suggested abolishing the board of the Scottish Funding Council and the creation of a new overarching board.⁷⁵ The Committee has committed to undertake its own inquiry work in this area if it is not satisfied with the evidence for the decision offered by the Government.
106. The Committee also explored the breadth of the Enterprise and Skills Review, for example asking whether consideration has been given to the impact of the SFC’s work in relation to education in the Review. Keith Brown MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work said:

” The Scottish funding council’s work covers areas that lie substantially outwith as well as within the scope of the review, but that area was not part of the review.⁷⁶

107. The Committee raised the issue with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on how the Phase 1 recommendation on the SFC will impact on education, for example, the work of the SFC in the promotion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (“STEM”) subjects in the curriculum. In his responses Mr Swinney highlighted the planned work on the learner journey in the review and that education sits within that work:

” We need to look at different services within a broader context and education plays a significant role in and makes a significant contribution to our economic development.⁷⁷

108. Universities Scotland wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Enterprise and Skills on 13 December 2016 highlighting a number of functions of the SFC that were wider

than the scope of the Review or not within the remit at all, such as widening access to higher education.⁷⁸

109. The Committee is concerned by the Government's intentions to pursue the Phase 1 recommendation when it has not seen the evidence to justify the abolition of the SFC Board.
110. Given the Committee's interest in the learner journey, the Committee awaits the Phase 2 findings on this with interest.
111. The Committee recognises the importance of a body undertaking the functions of the SFC. The Committee is particularly concerned that any reform does not risk universities being reclassified as public bodies and will continue to scrutinise the Enterprise and Skills review as it progresses.
112. The Committee is also concerned that there are areas directly impacted upon by the Review recommendation relating to the SFC that are deemed outwith the scope of the Review, for example in relation to widening access. The Committee recommends that the Government sets out, in advance of Phase 2 findings, what it considers the impact of the review will be on issues outwith the Review's scope.
113. The Committee raised a number of issues on the process followed by the Review with both the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The Committee emphasises again to the Government the importance of being able to demonstrate a clear evidence base for Phase 2 recommendations, including if it pursues the Phase 1 recommendation to abolish the SFC board.

Scottish Qualifications Authority

Summary

114. The SQA must improve its performance in a number of areas. The Committee received clear evidence pointing to a breakdown in the trust of the SQA by teachers.
115. The Committee raised concerns about exam scripts containing errors or that are difficult to understand.
116. The Committee is concerned the further overhaul of senior phase examinations to accommodate the removal of unit assessments means that the SQA will need to improve its performance in areas such as engaging and communicating effectively with teachers over a short timescale.

SQA's role

117. SQA is a statutory NDPB created under the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended by the Scottish Qualifications Authority Act 2002. The organisation has two main roles: accreditation and awarding qualifications.
118. SQA Accreditation accredits qualifications other than degrees. This is a separate and relatively small part of SQA activity. The majority of activity is undertaken by SQA as an Awarding Body. The Committee focused on SQA as an Awarding Body. In this role, the SQA:
- devises and develops qualifications other than degrees;
 - validates qualifications (makes sure they are well written and meet the needs of learners and tutors);
 - reviews qualifications to ensure they are up to date;
 - arranges for, assists in, and carries out, the assessment of people taking SQA qualifications;
 - quality-assures education and training establishments which offer SQA qualifications; and
 - issues certificates to candidates.
119. Scottish Government funding of the SQA is around £23m. However, only £4.3m of this is clearly identifiable funding in the Scottish Government Draft Budget (level 4 budget figures each year). The difference between these figures is because of the presentation of headings in the budget documents as well as 'in-year' funding provided to the SQA.
120. The majority of the SQA's public sector income is from entry charges for qualifications. Entry charges are charged both to private and public sector

providers, but most are raised from National Qualifications (£32m of £42m total entry charge income in 2014/15) and these are generally delivered via local authority schools.

Issues raised by the Committee

121. The Committee gathered a great deal of evidence and opinion on the performance of the SQA. The Committee's SQA survey had a significantly higher response than surveys on the other three bodies. The Committee received a high number of submissions and the majority of those were from teachers. Many of those teachers chose to have their submissions published anonymously. The Convener, James Dornan MSP, and Ross Greer MSP met with a group of teachers in the Parliament on 5 October 2016 and Ross Thomson MSP and Fulton MacGregor MSP visited the SQA's offices in Glasgow on 16 November 2016.
122. The Committee would like to thank everyone who provided evidence and their views to the Committee and the SQA for hosting the visit on 16 November.
123. The surveys and submissions from teachers painted a remarkably consistent picture. The clear message from the submissions, the survey and the meeting with teachers was that there has been a breakdown in trust between the SQA and a large portion of the teaching profession.
124. At its meeting with the SQA on 23 November 2016, the Committee explored a number of issues.

Relationship between the SQA and teaching profession

125. The evidence the Committee received points to an issue of trust between teachers and the SQA. However, Dr Janet Brown, Chief Executive of the SQA said in her opening statement to the Committee:

 We have a strong working relationship with teachers and lecturers across Scotland. Indeed more than 15,000 of them work with us in partnership every year to develop and deliver the qualifications system as a whole.⁷⁹

126. The Committee understands that the SQA engages with the profession to develop and deliver qualifications. There are over around 23,000 school-based secondary teachers employed in the public sector,⁸⁰ and it would appear that a large portion of those teachers are engaged directly in the work of the SQA. This is welcome and is a testament to the commitment of Scotland's teachers; however it does not follow that assisting the SQA (e.g. marking, which appears to be the activity that the majority of those teachers would be involved in) indicates a support of the SQA's work.

127. The Committee's survey on the SQA had 646 responses, significantly more than surveys for the other bodies. The results of the survey were surprising. Only 20% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement:
- Our customers and users trust us to 'get it right' for them. We are trusted by partners who know from experience that we deliver.⁸¹
128. The Committee is aware that in considering the results of the survey it should be noted that it is not based on a random sample, so may not be entirely representative of the general population. There are limitations that should be taken into account when considering the data the Committee has gathered and these are clearly set out in the findings summary produced by SPICe.
129. The Committee's results are in stark contrast with work that the SQA had commissioned. The SQA's submission highlights results from a survey it had commissioned undertaken in January 2016 which covered a range of stakeholders including learners, parents, teachers and employers. The SQA reported that 84% of respondents believed the SQA had high credibility and 91% believe the SQA can be trusted.⁸²
130. The Committee notes, however, that given an anonymous forum in which to freely express their views on the SQA and in their own words, the picture from teachers has been unfavourable.

131. The evidence the Committee has received from teachers should give the SQA serious cause for concern. The Committee considers that the distinction in feedback between the Committee's survey and the SQA commissioned survey is perhaps indicative of the current relationship with teachers. There would appear to be a divergence between what teachers will express to the SQA and what they will express to this Committee. The SQA is invited to review its approach to engaging with teachers to enable candid communication from those with criticisms to make. The SQA also needs to be able to demonstrate how these views impact on the SQA's processes in order to improve trust.

Teachers' submissions

132. The Committee received over thirty submissions from teachers, many of whom chose to remain anonymous. The Committee also received submissions from academics, and other stakeholders.
133. The main issues to come out of the submissions were: that SQA's documentation is unclear; assessment standards are not well-understood; there are too many changes; marking is inconsistent; and there is a tendency towards box-ticking approaches. Some of the negative comments from teachers are set out below:

- ” I am afraid that my current experience of the SQA is almost entirely negative ... Documentation is highly complex, repetitive and difficult to access (Anon 4)⁸³
- ” In the short term teachers are still struggling to keep up to date and make sense of the SQA documentation. SQA has not been able to communicate information in a clear concise manner. (Anon 13)⁸⁴
- ” Teachers have had to spend time on figuring out the over complicated administration of the course rather than the pedagogy of teaching only to be informed that things are to be changed for the next session. Every change the SQA make has a knock on effect. Old assessments have to be shredded, new ones printed. Prior learning needs to be adapted etc. (A Riddell)⁸⁵
- ” There have been so many mistakes –from the exam to the UASP and corrections and changes in information that we no longer trust anything that comes from them. We do not feel supported so we are spending time on paperwork checking instead of helping the students. (Anon 15)⁸⁶
- ” Good technique and good science loses marks if the correct hoops are not jumped through, a holistic marking system (such as that used by the [International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme] for practical work) would give a much fairer method of marking. (Anon 17)⁸⁷
- ” SQA has lost the respect and trust of Scottish teachers ... people are perplexed by the marking ... published materials are verbose and opaque. (Anon 19)⁸⁸
- ” The assessment of portfolio work is hugely inconsistent leading to wildly varying marks between candidates in any given year and from one year to the next. (Anon 20)⁸⁹
- ” I cannot communicate strongly enough how discouraging it is to see keen, talented, hardworking pupils walk away from my subject with a C when they deserved an A or decide not to continue with Art because they cannot deal with the physical workload. (Anon 21)⁹⁰
- ” It’s a lottery; not fit for purpose; very worrying; it’s a jumping through hoops exercise. (Comments collected by the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers)⁹¹
- ” The SQA was simply not for listening and six years on it has taken the threat of industrial action to alleviate these concerns ... we still have a myriad of documents and an assignment process which is deeply flawed. (Anon 28)⁹²
- ” The SQA has not appeared to be willing to listen to teachers’ concerns, nor to act upon them. (Anon 37)⁹³

- ” The idea that teachers [...] without significant experience of writing their own unit level assessments, would embrace the “opportunity” to write a sufficient number of their own assessments to meet unit reassessment needs was somewhat optimistic. (Anon 32)⁹⁴
- ” Why should a teacher have to (and I have) be an SQA marker to truly understand what is expected? this information should be shared freely for the benefit of all our pupils. (Anon 39)⁹⁵

134. The purpose of listing the comments above is to provide a flavour of the depth and consistency of the concerns. Not all submissions from teachers were negative. One respondent, who works in an independent school and has experience working with examination boards from across the UK, suggested that the SQA was “by far the best of the major awarding bodies in the UK” (Anon 32)⁹⁶. North East Scotland College wrote in favourable terms about the SQA⁹⁷ and many (but not all) of the teachers had positive personal experience of speaking to or working with the SQA. However, negative comments predominated and were largely around the design, delivery, supporting documentation, and marking of national qualifications. These issues are explored further below.
135. The Committee asked the SQA to consider the feedback the Committee has received. The SQA’s response set out how it supports teachers and provides support and advice on National Qualifications.⁹⁸
136. The survey information should be considered in context but can reasonably be considered to be representative of at least a significant portion of the profession. Dr Brown recognised that there are issues with the way the SQA works, she said:

- ” I think that a lot of the negative views are associated with the way in which the qualifications have been designed and implemented and the way in which they have worked. What we have done—and continue to do—is try to understand why they have not worked in the way that we anticipated they would work. We need to make sure that we remove the problems that we have created as a result of those designs.⁹⁹

137. The Committee will monitor the performance of the SQA throughout this session of Parliament. The Committee expects to see evidence of speedy improvements in the design, delivery, supporting documentation, and marking of national qualifications.

Design of national qualifications

138. Dr Brown argued that the overall design and timetable for implementation of national qualifications was agreed by the CfE Management Board and were based on a shared understanding of the learning level that candidates would have

achieved at the end of Broad General Education (“BGE”).¹⁰⁰ She also argued that the assessments were designed with the principles of CfE in mind.

” The way the old qualifications were developed, with off-the-shelf assessments, off-the-shelf books and off-the-shelf everything else, probably resulted in less of a workload for teachers. The challenge for Scotland is to understand whether that is the type of education that we want or whether we want the ability not to teach in a straitjacket. The negative to that is providing the detailed assessments and the detailed information.¹⁰¹

139. The RSE noted that the Working Group on Assessment and National Qualifications concluded that the design of CFE qualifications has had a number of unintended consequences such as an unsustainable level of workload for learners and teachers.¹⁰²

140. Prof Lindsay Paterson identified four areas of concern in regard to the performance of the SQA: potential narrowing of the curriculum in S4; restricted options for progression beyond S4; emerging low status of National 4; and excessive amount of assessment in the new courses.¹⁰³

141. Prof Mark Priestley highlighted the length of national courses as being an issue.

” The decision by SQA to stick with 160 hour courses for National 4 and National 5 qualifications ... has been significant in shaping schools’ development of senior phase provision. ... The consequence of this has been a narrowing of the curriculum in many schools in S4, at a stage when students are being asked to make significant choices that will impact upon their life chances. Emerging evidence suggests that this narrowing is adversely impacting on non-core subjects such as foreign languages. It runs counter to the well-established reputation of Scottish education for breadth.¹⁰⁴

142. The Committee notes that, during the evidence session the Committee held with Education Scotland on 30 November 2016, Dr Bill Maxwell was unable to provide evidence that the curriculum had not narrowed during the senior phase.¹⁰⁵

143. The SQA argued that the take-up of qualifications and how many are delivered in one year is a matter for schools and colleges. In the context of financial planning, Dr Brown indicated that the SQA had planned for fewer candidates taking National 5 qualifications and had expected more to bypass those qualifications and take Highers.¹⁰⁶ She went on to say:

” The notional learning hours reflected our expectation of approximately how long it would take an average candidate to do the course ... If schools try to do it all in one year, they are limiting the number of subjects they can do ... or schools are giving courses with as little as 90 hours of learning ... That

situation also has huge issues for learners in terms of the amount of information involved.¹⁰⁷

144. The SQA's position on the design of the new CfE qualifications appears to be that they were given a brief and a timescale that has been met and that many of the problems experienced have been caused by a disconnect between the principles of CfE and how education is delivered in some schools, with some possibly preferring an "off-the-shelf" curriculum.
145. The Committee has agreed to undertake more work on the accountability for the delivery of CfE and in particular the senior phase. However, even if the SQA's position were hypothetically to be accepted, the Committee would still find it difficult to understand how the SQA has fulfilled its role to its core customers, the learners of Scotland, having produced qualifications that have led to an onerous workload, a breakdown in trust and threats of industrial action by teachers.
146. SQA is a member of the CfE management Board and has a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of CfE. SQA should be proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the broader development of CfE.

Communication and guidance

147. Dr Brown said the "nature of our engagement and communication with teachers is critical".¹⁰⁸ She also admitted that the SQA find communication an "extremely complicated and challenging area".¹⁰⁹
148. Dr Brown indicated that specific course content and guidance has been developed in consultation with stakeholders from across the sector.¹¹⁰ The SQA stated that it listens to teachers' concerns about its guidance and documentation; however, making changes can lead to new iterations of guidance which adds to teachers' workload.¹¹¹
149. During a meeting with a number of teachers in the Parliament on 5 October 2016, members of the Committee heard concerns that the SQA does not communicate clearly enough to teachers and explain what is required of them and their learners.¹¹² The Royal Scottish Geography Society also reported that its members found SQA's guidance difficult to use, it stated:

 Teachers have reported consistently that the guidance given is unclear and has therefore been open to a variety of interpretations, leading to inconsistent implementation across Scotland.¹¹³
150. Dr Brown acknowledged that implementing new qualifications is associated with significant change. She explained that this leads to a demand for more information.

” As we put more information out into the system, it becomes more complex, especially when we put out individual documents instead of ... using a different format, which technology might allow us to do in the future.¹¹⁴

151. As indicated in the quote above, the SQA stated it is planning to develop new information technology to individualise and simplify the information teachers need to access.¹¹⁵ In its follow-up letter to the Committee, the SQA stated:

” A significant piece of this work will be to simplify the way in which centres, businesses, teachers, parents and candidates engage with SQA online, ensuring they need only visit one website to access the tailored information they require depending on their role.¹¹⁶

152. Some of the feedback the Committee received from teachers was that while SQA meetings and events were helpful, arranging time off to attend can be difficult. In its letter of 16 December 2016 to the Committee, the SQA provided statistics for Understanding Standards and Nominee Training events; both types of events had high satisfaction ratings.¹¹⁷

153. In her evidence to the Committee, Dr Brown suggested that some of that support may be better delivered by local authorities and that the delivery of support should be reviewed by the CfE Assessment and National Qualifications Group.¹¹⁸

154. Accountability for the overall design brief of CfE qualifications is unclear but the responsibility for communicating those changes lies squarely with the SQA. The delivery of the new qualifications was not a surprise and the SQA should have been prepared and had the capacity to communicate effectively from the beginning. The Committee accepts that the structure of Scottish Education is diffuse, however good planning and the ability to produce documents that are easy to use by the intended audience are capacities the Committee expects of every public body.

Quality and quality assurance

155. The quality of exam scripts, marking and quality assurance processes of the SQA was raised by a number of respondents and by the Committee. In terms of errors in exam scripts, Dr Brown said:

” [Errors] are happening because people are working extremely hard. As a result of the errors that have occurred, we have taken additional quality assurance steps so that we have fresh eyes looking at the nature of the assessments. We also need to ensure that we control everything that is required to make the questions that are in the questions papers valid and appropriate and that we have appropriate engagements with institutions to develop those particular aspects.¹¹⁹

156. The Committee asked the SQA to reflect on some of the evidence it had received particularly from the Scottish Association of Geography Teachers which indicated that its members were extremely unhappy with the quality and consistency of a recent geography paper. In relation to the Higher Geography exam, the SQA stated:

” The 2016 Higher Geography question paper aligned with the Course Assessment Specification, Specimen Question Paper and the 2015 question paper. It examined Physical Geography, Human Geography and Global Issues that are fully detailed in our published course documentation.

We received no (zero) complaints about the 2016 question paper after the examination had taken place. The only feedback received was from Fife Council on behalf of its Geography teachers which was positive in nature.¹²⁰

157. The RSE highlighted also issues with the 2015 Higher Mathematics exam and the 2016 National 5 Computing exam. It stated:

” We welcome SQA’s recent decision to revert to an approach which provides for professional collaborative working in preparing draft question papers in the STEM subjects. However, there is perhaps a case for exploring whether this revised approach should be adopted for all subject areas.¹²¹

158. In terms of the quality and consistency of marking and markers, Dr Brown highlighted the importance of the recruitment process. She also explained that the SQA now place a number already marked scripts in markers’ work to monitor the quality of work. Dr Brown said, “there has been a significant increase in monitoring the quality of markers.”¹²²

159. Dr Brown also described how the SQA supports markers through markers meetings and support when problems are identified. She highlighted the importance of markers’ meetings, saying:

” We have continued the face-to-face events because we believe that teachers get benefit from them and like them—the feedback that we get from markers meetings is hugely positive. Teachers run the system and it is extremely important that we have clarity on marking.¹²³

160. The SQA’s core business is producing and marking exams. Errors in these areas are unacceptable. The Committee is concerned that Dr Brown suggests that errors occur because of excessive workload and has presented the solution as being more work on quality assurance. The Committee therefore urges the SQA to consider how to re-prioritise resources to address such issues and fulfil its core functions.

Invigilators pay

161. The Committee sought clarification on the hourly rate of pay that invigilators receive. Invigilators receive a set fee for an exam session, which can be of variable length. The SQA contended that over the whole pay period, invigilators would receive at least the living wage. However it currently relies on chief invigilators to ensure this happens.¹²⁴ In its letter of 16 December 2016 to the Committee, the SQA said:

” All work undertaken by Invigilators is monitored by Chief Invigilators to ensure that Invigilators are assigned to a variety of examination sessions with differing lengths of duration to achieve a balance across the examination period...

... It is worth emphasising that from a pool of 6000 Invigilators the number of concerns regarding fees raised each year is less than 5. A survey is being organised for the 2017 Invigilators to give them the opportunity to feedback comments and views on the current fee arrangements.¹²⁵

162. The Committee asks that the SQA ensures that it improves its data collection from chief invigilators so that it is in a position to categorically state that all of the people it appoints receive the living wage. Alternatively, the SQA should review standard terms and conditions for employment of invigilators to create a system where invigilators receive a minimum wage as standard. The Committee requests an update from the SQA on this before the exam diet this May.

Budget and funding

163. The Committee explored whether the SQA is financially sustainable. The SQA receives a fixed fee from local authorities regardless of the numbers of candidate entries. The SQA told the Committee that this fixed fee is based upon prices at 2010 and candidate entries during 2012-13 but the number of candidate entries has increased since then. The SQA agreed that while this provides financial certainty to local authorities, it passes additional costs to the SQA.¹²⁶

164. Dr Brown also indicated that the SQA's commercial work outside of Scotland is profitable and that it utilises expertise, especially in vocational qualifications, “to provide an income base or profit base that allows us to do more in Scotland.”¹²⁷

165. The SQA's submission stated that “there has been a substantial increase in certifications outside Scotland rising from 5,600 in 2010 to 23,800 in 2015/16.”¹²⁸ The EIS questioned whether focusing on international work has lessened the SQA's focus on delivering national qualifications in Scotland.¹²⁹ Dr Brown refuted this suggestion.¹³⁰

166. The SQA regularly requires in-year funding to support its operation. The SQA's submission sets out the reasons it requires additional grant funding from the Scottish Government:

- Uncertainty around the number of candidate entries in light of the Local Authority fixed cost model;
- Undertaking additional activities in the course of the year; and
- Volatile cash-flow for other activities.¹³¹

167. As a result of the decision to remove the requirement of unit assessments in senior phase qualifications, the SQA will need to redesign the qualifications. Dr Brown said she expects to have to access additional resources for this purpose. Dr Brown said that she would be engaging with local authorities and teacher's representatives and that the timetable for this work is "hugely challenging".¹³²

168. The SQA needs to develop updated CfE qualifications and, importantly, communicate any changes to the teaching profession in the short timeframe available. This will require the SQA to improve in several areas while under considerable time pressure. The Committee urges the SQA, local authorities, Education Scotland and teaching representative bodies to have a clear focus on how teachers will be given the time and resource to understand what is expected from teachers and learners. The Committee would welcome regular updates on this work.

169. The Committee is aware that the SQA has a long term aim to make the SQA self-financing.¹³³ It does not appear that this aim is likely to occur in the near future without significant costs being passed on to other parts of the public sector. The Committee seeks assurance and evidence from the SQA that its commercial work is not diluting its focus on its core business.

Education Scotland

Summary

170. The Committee explored the perception that Education Scotland is too close to the Scottish Government and that performing both curriculum support and inspection functions could be seen to be a conflict of interest.
171. The Committee raised concerns about how the impact of CfE is measured and who is accountable for that impact.
172. The Committee explored the value and developing nature of inspections. In addition, the Committee raised the issue about the apparent falling number of inspections and inspectors.

Education Scotland's role

173. Education Scotland is an Executive Agency formed in 2011 from a merger of Learning and Teaching Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Scottish Government teams developing policy on positive behaviour and continuous professional development. Its functions include:
- inspection and review of various education provision;
 - provision of guidance and support in relation to Curriculum for Excellence, teachers' continuous professional development and promoting positive behaviour in schools;
 - provision of teaching resources on its website; and
 - issuing grants, mainly to youth organisations (i.e. £4.5m in 15/16, £5.9m in 14/15).
174. Particular current initiatives include:
- a lead role in the Attainment Challenge, including attainment advisers working with each local authority;
 - close working with the Scottish Government in developing the National Improvement Framework and standardised assessments; and
 - being asked by the Cabinet Secretary to 'streamline' CfE guidance.
175. Education Scotland had a final budget of £36.7m in 2015/16 and employs 347 staff across seven offices. Most (c.£20m) of its budget is for staff costs. Initial budget was £24.8m but in-year transfers of £11.8m increased this to £36.6m at year end. Initial budget for 16/17 was £23.3m and year end budget is currently expected to be £34.5m.

Issues raised by the Committee

176. The Committee received 23 written submissions, many from individual teachers. The Committee agreed to accept anonymous submissions in order to widen participation in the Committee's work. Submissions were also received from stakeholders and academics.
177. James Dornan MSP and Ross Greer MSP met with a group of teachers on 5 October 2016. Themes arising in the discussion included:
- lack of time for teachers to access Education Scotland resources;
 - inspection may not reveal the reality of school life; and
 - guidance from Education Scotland could be useful in providing a consistent approach.
178. An online survey was run during October (see Annexe A) and Tavish Scott MSP and Gillian Martin MSP met Education Scotland officials on 23 November.
179. Despite the wide range of Education Scotland's functions, the evidence was concerned almost entirely with the development of CfE and school inspections. The main themes in the submissions were:
- relationship with Ministers;
 - role as both inspector and developer of the curriculum;
 - standard of CfE guidance; and
 - the experience of inspections.
180. The Committee took evidence from Education Scotland on 30 November 2016 and explored these themes.

Relationship with Government and other bodies

181. EIS stated it had concerns about what it called the "increasingly politicised role" of Education Scotland, referring to "the role of the Inspectorate having been brought closer to Government." The EIS stated that, in relation to the National Improvement Framework and standardised assessment,

” Education Scotland has been reticent to challenge the misconceptions and/or politically motivated approaches of civil servants and ministers.”¹³⁴

182. Dr Bill Maxwell, Chief Executive of Education Scotland, outlined Education Scotland's role in respect of policy development to the Committee. He said:

” It is our duty to inform ministers with accurate evidence first about whether policy is, in our view, in the right direction and, secondly, once it is being

implemented, whether it is having the desired effect. Ultimately, it is for ministers and policy officials to determine whether and to what extent they follow that advice.¹³⁵

183. Dr Maxwell suggested that Education draws on its own expertise and data to influence policy which may fall somewhere between the views of the Scottish Government and professional bodies.¹³⁶
184. Dr Maxwell suggested that policy development in relation to CfE took place collaboratively at the CfE Management Board.¹³⁷ Graham Logan, Strategic Director at Education Scotland confirmed that the development of the curriculum, however, is undertaken at a local level.¹³⁸
185. When asked whether it was Education Scotland's role to take forward policy, Dr Maxwell stated:

” The responsibility for providing guidance that matches the policy that we have all agreed certainly lies with us.¹³⁹

186. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged in his opening remarks to the Committee on 21st December that the design and delivery of CfE is complicated and includes a number of stakeholders and that a challenge he faces is to ensure that the discussions between stakeholders are focused and produce “a clear sense of direction”. The Cabinet Secretary indicated he would be looking at the governance arrangements for the delivery of CfE and do so “in a timely fashion to ensure that they operate effectively, clearly and transparently, so that lines of accountability are clear.”¹⁴⁰

187. The evidence from Dr Maxwell suggested that the lines of accountability in relation to Education Scotland's roles in advising the Scottish Government, driving policy and the inspection regime should be clearer and require further investigation by this Committee.

188. More broadly, the Committee needs clarity as to who is the decision taker or the clear lead in the different areas of the development and delivery of CfE. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary's undertaking to look at this issue and the Committee has also decided to undertake further work in this area which can inform the Cabinet Secretary's deliberations on the need for change.

189. Education Scotland is a member of the CfE management Board and has a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of CfE. Education Scotland should be proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the broad development of CfE.

Dual role

190. In terms of the dual purpose of Education Scotland as an independent evaluator in its inspectorate role and as a developer of the curriculum, the RSE, Reform Scotland and Prof Lindsay Paterson all raised similar concerns. For example, in his submission, Prof Paterson wrote:

” Education Scotland is responsible for developing CfE and, through the inspectorate, for evaluating it. This risks a conflict of interest.¹⁴¹

191. The issue also arose in submissions from individual teachers:

” I query how well inspection reports will challenge bureaucracy generated by Education Scotland. (Anon 2)¹⁴²

” [The dual role] leads to a sense of mistrust in Education Scotland and thereby reduces any potential positive impact of their work. (Anon 20)¹⁴³

192. Dr Maxwell identified Education Scotland’s key role as being to “improve the educational outcomes for Scottish learners”.¹⁴⁴ Dr Maxwell suggested that having inspection and curriculum advice within the one organisation has created “healthy synergies and that no real conflict of interest has arisen in practice”.¹⁴⁵

193. Alastair Delaney, Chief Operating Officer of Education Scotland explained that inspectors’ independence is protected by their status as appointees of the Privy Council and through a framework document that places a duty on Mr Delaney, in his role as director of inspection, to ensure inspectors operate “without fear or favour”.¹⁴⁶

194. Dr Maxwell described how quality assurance in schools is carried out at three levels: schools themselves; local authorities; and the inspectors.¹⁴⁷

195. In terms of how Education Scotland assesses its own impact, its submission stated that until June 2016, this was carried out by its internal Strategic Impact Board. Since June 2016, and as part of an updated approach to Education Scotland evaluating its impact, a new Portfolio Board has been convened. The submission also stated:

” While this new approach is still being developed, the suite of programme outcomes with performance measures will be in place by the end of the financial year.¹⁴⁸

196. The role of Education Scotland is being considered as part of the Scottish Government’s Education Governance Review. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government takes account of the evidence the Committee has received, and the resulting findings, on the role of Education Scotland and the performance of the SQA in considering how to proceed.

197. Having raised the specific issues detailed in evidence in relation to the dual role of Education Scotland with the body and the Cabinet Secretary, the Committee will consider this matter further as part of its pre-legislative scrutiny. This scrutiny will include consideration of the appropriate roles of both Education Scotland and the SQA in education in future.

Evaluation of CfE

198. In his submission, Prof Paterson referred to the OECD's report on CfE, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*. Prof Paterson's interpretation of that report's comments on evaluating the impact of CfE was "that evaluation is necessary, is not being done, and now cannot validly be done because baseline data were not collected at the point when the reform started."¹⁴⁹ He continued:

” It is now too late to evaluate how CfE is working in detail, school by school, because the moment at which the comparative data could have been collected has passed. Missing that moment might be described as a dereliction of duty by Education Scotland.¹⁵⁰

199. Dr Maxwell argued that in secondary schools, assessment data provides a way of assessing progress, but at primary school level, there is less data.¹⁵¹ Dr Maxwell had a differing interpretation of the OECD report which had called for "further research and evidence gathering on CfE's impact on various aspects" which are not covered by exam results, for example, and this research is being taken forward by the Scottish Government.¹⁵²

200. Mr Logan indicated that Education Scotland will shortly publish a three-year analysis of inspection trends across different education sectors.¹⁵³ He highlighted inspections' role in assessing how CfE has progressed and said:

” In every school that has been inspected, the curriculum has been evaluated. When schools have been inspected on a sample basis, we have looked at the design of the curriculum and the quality of courses and programmes. That evidence has been collated and reported regularly.¹⁵⁴

201. However, Dr Maxwell noted that precisely measuring the impact of a broad curriculum reform and its outcomes will always be difficult.¹⁵⁵ In its letter to the Committee of 16 December 2016, Education Scotland stated that the approach to evaluating CfE is "designed to be formative and supportive in nature, helping to improve the development and implementation of this major reform."¹⁵⁶

202. The Committee considers that when setting out on a programme of reform, clear outcome-based baseline data should be collected to allow measurement of the effectiveness of the reform as it is rolled out. The Committee is keen that this lesson be learnt for any future reform. The Committee regrets that the opportunity for this to be done for CfE has now passed. The Committee urges Education Scotland and the Scottish Government to consider what can be done to address the consequences of this.
203. The Committee welcomes plans for evidence based research on the delivery and efficacy of CfE and looks forward to the research influencing policy development. The Committee is also interested in the forthcoming analysis of inspection trends and particularly how that document will evaluate the curriculum.

Inspection

204. Education Scotland provided the Committee with figures on the numbers of inspections it would be carrying out in the current and previous financial year. These figures revealed that the number of inspections of schools has been reducing and would reduce this year. Mr Delaney stated that more recent projections suggested the number of inspections would be at least the same as last year¹⁵⁷ and Education Scotland stated in its letter of 16 December 2016 that it anticipates conducting between 115-120 inspections in the current financial year¹⁵⁸. Nonetheless, the number of school inspections will be lower than in 2012/13.
205. The Committee received evidence that teachers find the inspection process unduly stressful and preparation required a great deal of work. One submission said:
- ” When the inspection was announced in our school, the school was opened (at a cost) for two weekends to allow staff to “tidy things up” and staff were drafted in from the Authority to ensure paperwork was “what the inspectorate would be looking for”. Speaking to colleagues in other schools this seems common practice. (Anon 19)¹⁵⁹
206. Mr Delaney recognised that this does happen and that some teachers will naturally be concerned when someone is assessing their practice. However he stated that inspectors do not require or want to see large amounts of paperwork or other preparation in advance of inspections. He said:
- ” The whole Scottish system is based on self-evaluation, which means that schools should have to make no adjustments whatever for an inspection team coming in; everything should just be as expected.¹⁶⁰

207. Mr Delaney advised the Committee that Education Scotland were about to begin a publicity campaign to clarify what is involved in an inspection.¹⁶¹
208. Dr Maxwell outlined the three levels of quality assurance in Scottish school education: self-evaluation by schools; local authorities' quality assurance; and inspections.¹⁶² In its report, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*, the OECD also notes the role of school self-evaluation as part of the Scottish approach to inspection.¹⁶³ Education Scotland also outlined how they are developing new types of inspection. This included: full inspections with sharper focus on a particular indicator or outcome agreed with the school in advance; shorter models of inspections; the possibility of short-notice inspections; and community-based inspections from the learners point of view.¹⁶⁴

209. In the context of Education Scotland's assertion that inspections provide evidence of the impact of CfE, the Committee is concerned that the number of inspections appeared to be reducing. The Committee urges Education Scotland to ensure that it is carrying out this core function regularly to support schools, local authorities and the national bodies in delivering CfE.
210. The Committee believes it is vital that inspectors are able to understand how a school operates under normal circumstances and provide constructive feedback. The Committee is therefore concerned that inspections may lead to a change in the normal running of schools, creating additional work and potentially a false impression. The Committee welcomes Education Scotland's plans to correct misconceptions about what inspections entail. The Committee urges Education Scotland to work with local authorities and directly with schools to challenge these misconceptions.
211. The Committee notes the importance of the quality assurance provided by local authorities and schools themselves. The Committee also welcomes Education Scotland developing a broader suite of inspections.

Teacher workload and volume of guidance

212. A number of respondents raised concerns about the volume and nature of Education Scotland's curriculum guidance. Prof Mark Priestley raised concerns that:

” Curriculum guidance by Education Scotland has continued to reiterate (often with subtle changes) rather than replace previous guidance. This has led to a proliferation of guidance and clarification, most recently during the summer of 2016 ... The net result of these trends has been confusion for many practitioners and an increased need for bureaucratic box-ticking approaches, which in turn increase workload.

213. Dr Maxwell suggested that much of the documentation is demand-led and that this is normal during the early implementation stage of a programme.¹⁶⁵ Education Scotland stated that it is now rebuilding its “websites to give them a much sharper focus”.¹⁶⁶ Mr Logan explained:

” [There will be a] 90 per cent reduction in the amount of case studies and materials. About 20,000 pages of examples and case studies have been built up; they have been requested over the years by the management board and others to provide different examples of CFE. We are stripping that resource right back to the core materials.¹⁶⁷

214. The Committee welcomes the review and reduction of the level of documentation on CfE but suggests that there will be more work to be done to ensure that the guidance is accessible, clear and is easily usable. The Committee welcomes the Cabinet Secretary’s action since May 2016 in dealing with the 20,000 pages of changing guidance issued by Education Scotland on CfE which as a whole has placed an unnecessary burden on the teaching profession.

Budget planning

215. The Committee was not clear about how Education Scotland undertakes financial planning. Its submission refers to an annual zero-based approach – that is all spending is reviewed on an annual basis. However, in evidence Education Scotland clarified that some funding is allocated to programmes which will run for longer than one year and that, in response to the delivery plan published in June 2016, its budgets for 2016/17 were re-profiled. In addition, Education Scotland indicated that its in-year budget transfers are used to take forward Scottish Government policy priorities, particularly in providing grants.¹⁶⁸ Education Scotland stated that such in-year transfers can have a small impact on its core business due to the requirement to “deploy some of our baseline staff resource to manage the delivery of this work”.¹⁶⁹

216. The Committee invites Education Scotland to set out more clearly the specifics of its financial planning processes to enable the Committee to give this more forensic scrutiny in future years. Clear and transparent financial planning will become increasingly important given it has a more limited budget in the coming financial year.

Education authorities

217. The Committee held a general evidence session on the role of education authorities on 14th December including discussion on:

- the role of authorities in ensuring the consistent delivery of Curriculum for Excellence; and
- the role of authorities on the Curriculum for Excellence management board, including acting as a challenge function to SQA and Education Scotland and a conduit for the views of teachers to those organisations.

218. In advance of the session, Audit Scotland provided a useful informal briefing to the Committee on the Accounts Commission's work to implement its 2014 report on Scottish Education. This included highlighting the variable performance across education authorities and detailing its presentations made to education authorities which compared each authority's performance with useful comparator authorities.

219. When asked generally about performance issues in Scottish education highlighted by the PISA results, SLGP highlighted in evidence that "at times, national guidance has not been the clearest" and COSLA highlighted budget constraints.¹⁷⁰

220. When asked on the variation of delivery between local authorities in getting to level 4 by S3, and whether the timing and structure of courses was an issue for COSLA, Councillor Primrose responded "I would think that it is more of an issue for Education Scotland".¹⁷¹

221. The supplementary evidence from the SQA highlighted the importance of achieving level 4 by S3 stating:

” National 5 for example requires nominally 160 hours for delivery and has a recommended entry of a candidate being secure in their learning at curriculum level 4 or having successfully completed National 4 course.¹⁷²

222. When asked what action COSLA took in relation to the burden on teachers of excessive guidance, Councillor Primrose responded:

” The teachers were not responsible for the 20,000 pages of documents—that was an Education Scotland and SQA responsibility, and I agree that it was cumbersome.¹⁷³

223. COSLA is a member of the CfE management Board and its members, as the statutory bodies for education, have a critical role to play in delivery and implementation of CfE so COSLA should be much more proactive at challenging and contributing constructively to the development of guidance and advice for teachers.

224. The Committee considers that COSLA has a crucial role in the delivery of CfE and it is not clear to the Committee how it is delivering this.
225. In turn, education authorities are the overarching guardians of teacher workload, as well as for the wellbeing of the school workforce, and so have the primary responsibility to monitor and scrutinise the impact of guidance and advice and feed concerns up to Board level, as well as act on these at local level.
226. The variation in performance of education authorities is concerning. Education authorities should collaborate more effectively to share best practice. Those authorities currently with performance challenges should take the necessary steps to address these, including taking up the offer of support from the Accounts Commission. The Committee intends to continue to monitor this.

¹ SQA (2014) [SQA Corporate Plan 2014–17](#) (p3)

² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 15 December 2016

³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 7 December 2016

⁴ Scottish Government (2016) [Enterprise and Skills review](#)

⁵ Scottish Government (2016) [Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve Excellence and Equity – a governance review](#)

⁶ Kidner C. (2016) [SPICe Briefing with online survey results](#)

⁷ Royal Society of Edinburgh (2016) [Scottish Government Review of School Governance: Discussion Report](#)

⁸ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Letter to North Lanarkshire Council \(22 December 2016\)](#)

⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 14 December 2016 Cols 28-30

¹⁰ North Lanarkshire Council (2017), [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(13 January 2017\)](#)

¹¹ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Operating Plan 2016-17](#) (p34)

¹² Swinney J. (2016) [SDS Letter of Guidance](#)

¹³ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Education and Skills Committee, Pre-budget 2016/17 Scrutiny](#)

¹⁴ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Education and Skills Committee, Pre-budget 2016/17 Scrutiny](#)

¹⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 14

¹⁶ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Education and Skills Committee, Pre-budget 2016/17 Scrutiny](#)

¹⁷ Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group, [Submission to the Convenor of the Education & Skills Committee](#)

¹⁸ Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group, [Submission to the Convenor of the Education & Skills Committee](#)

¹⁹ SOLACE Scotland (2016) [Submission on Pre-Budget Scrutiny on Public Bodies](#)

²⁰ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Letter to the Education And Skills Committee \(12 December 2016\)](#)

²¹ Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (2014) [Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Final Report](#) (p58)

²² Skills Development Scotland (2015) [Equalities action plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland](#)

²³ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Education and Skills Committee, Pre-budget 2016/17 Scrutiny](#) (p11)

²⁴ SCVO (2016) [Education and Skills Committee: SCVO Reflections on Skills Development Scotland](#)

²⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Cols 3-5

²⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 7

²⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 7

²⁸ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 9

²⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 9

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- ³⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 10
- ³¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Cols 8-11
- ³² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 11
- ³³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Cols 29-31
- ³⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 31
- ³⁵ Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (2016) [Scottish Parliament – Education and Skills Committee inquiry, Evidence from the Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce](#)
- ³⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 9 November 2016 Col 31
- ³⁷ CBI Scotland (2016) [CBI Scotland response to the Education and Skills Committee pre-budget scrutiny of Skills Development Scotland](#)
- ³⁸ Skills Development Scotland (2016) [Letter to the Education And Skills Committee \(12 December 2016\)](#)
- ³⁹ Scottish Funding Council [Who we fund](#)
- ⁴⁰ Scottish Funding Council [Council Board](#)
- ⁴¹ Universities Scotland (2016) [Universities Scotland submission to the Education and Skills Committee as part of its pre-budget 2017/18 scrutiny](#)
- ⁴² Universities Scotland (2016) [Universities Scotland submission to the Education and Skills Committee as part of its pre-budget 2017/18 scrutiny](#)
- ⁴³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 25
- ⁴⁴ Royal Society of Edinburgh (2016) [The Performance of the Scottish Funding Council: Comments to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee](#)
- ⁴⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 29
- ⁴⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 26
- ⁴⁷ Scottish Funding Council (2016) [Accounting standards and long-term financial planning](#) (p3)
- ⁴⁸ Auditor General for Scotland (2016) [Pre-budget scrutiny of Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#) (p3)
- ⁴⁹ Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee, *Official Report*, 1 December 2016 Col 5
- ⁵⁰ Universities Scotland (2016) [Universities Scotland submission to the Education and Skills Committee as part of its pre-budget 2017/18 scrutiny](#)
- ⁵¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Cols 27-28
- ⁵² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 37
- ⁵³ NUS Scotland (2016) [Pre-Budget 2017/18 Scrutiny: NUS Scotland submission](#)
- ⁵⁴ Universities Scotland (2016) [Universities Scotland submission to the Education and Skills Committee as part of its pre-budget 2017/18 scrutiny](#) (p3)
- ⁵⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 25
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- ⁵⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 33
- ⁵⁸ Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(1 December 2016\)](#)
- ⁵⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Cols 31-32
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- ⁶² Scottish Funding Council (2016) [Impact and success of the programme of college mergers in Scotland](#)
- ⁶³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 40
- ⁶⁴ Scottish Funding Council (2016) [Depreciation briefing](#)
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- ⁶⁸ North East Scotland College (2016) [Submission from North East Scotland College](#)
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- ⁷⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 16 November 2016 Col 26
- ⁷¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 7 December 2016
- ⁷² Scottish Government (2016) [Enterprise & Skills Review: Report on Phase 1](#) (p7)
- ⁷³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 7 December 2016 Col 20
- ⁷⁴ Universities Scotland (2016) [Letter to Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work \(13 December 2016\)](#)
- ⁷⁵ Education and Skills Committee, [Letter to Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work \(9 December 2016\)](#)
- ⁷⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 7 December 2016 Col 17

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- ⁷⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 21 December 2016 Col 30
- ⁷⁸ Universities Scotland (2016) [Letter to Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work \(13 December 2016\)](#)
- ⁷⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 3
- ⁸⁰ Scottish Government (2016), [Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No: 7-2016](#)
- ⁸¹ SQA (2015) [SQA Corporate Plan 2016–19](#) (p3)
- ⁸² SQA (2016) [Education and Skills Committee Briefing](#)
- ⁸³ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA04\)](#)
- ⁸⁴ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA13\)](#)
- ⁸⁵ Riddell A. (2016) [Scottish Qualifications Authority/Education Scotland Submission](#)
- ⁸⁶ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA15\)](#)
- ⁸⁷ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA17\)](#)
- ⁸⁸ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA19\)](#)
- ⁸⁹ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA20\)](#)
- ⁹⁰ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA21\)](#)
- ⁹¹ Scottish Association of Geography Teachers (2016) [Scottish Qualifications Authority Submission](#)
- ⁹² Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA28\)](#)
- ⁹³ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA37\)](#)
- ⁹⁴ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA32\)](#)
- ⁹⁵ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA39\)](#)
- ⁹⁶ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS_SQA32\)](#)
- ⁹⁷ North East Scotland College (2016) [Scottish Qualifications Authority Submission](#)
- ⁹⁸ SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p7-8)
- ⁹⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 46
- ¹⁰⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 2
- ¹⁰¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 21
- ¹⁰² Royal Society of Edinburgh (2016) [The Performance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority: Comments to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee](#)
- ¹⁰³ Dr Lindsay Patterson (2016) [Submission from Dr Lindsay Patterson](#)
- ¹⁰⁴ Prof Mark Priestley (2016) [Submission from Prof Mark Priestley](#)
- ¹⁰⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Cols 40-41
- ¹⁰⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 31
- ¹⁰⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Cols 43-44
- ¹⁰⁸ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 11
- ¹⁰⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 6
- ¹¹⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 2
- ¹¹¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 13
- ¹¹² Scottish Parliament (2016) [Discussion Group on impact on outcomes of Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority](#) (p4)
- ¹¹³ The Royal Scottish Geographical Society (2016) [Submission from The Royal Scottish Geographical Society](#)
- ¹¹⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 19
- ¹¹⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 14
- ¹¹⁶ SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p4)
- ¹¹⁷ SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p8-9)
- ¹¹⁸ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 28
- ¹¹⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 9
- ¹²⁰ SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p4)
- ¹²¹ Royal Society of Edinburgh (2016) [The Performance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority: Comments to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee](#)
- ¹²² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 36
- ¹²³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 30
- ¹²⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Cols 16-19
- ¹²⁵ SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p5)
- ¹²⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 31
- ¹²⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 40
- ¹²⁸ SQA (2016) [Education and Skills Committee Briefing](#) (p4)

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- ¹²⁹ Education Institute Scotland (2016) [Pre-budget Review of the Performance of the Scottish Qualifications Authority](#)
- ¹³⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 40
- ¹³¹ SQA (2016) [Education and Skills Committee Briefing](#) (p 6)
- ¹³² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 23 November 2016 Col 27
- ¹³³ SQA (2014) [SQA Corporate Plan 2014–17](#) (p3)
- ¹³⁴ Education Institute Scotland (2016) [Pre-budget Review of the Performance of Education Scotland](#)
- ¹³⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 10
- ¹³⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 21
- ¹³⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 9
- ¹³⁸ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 14
- ¹³⁹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 9
- ¹⁴⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 21 December 2016 Col 4
- ¹⁴¹ Dr Lindsay Paterson (2016) [Submission from Dr Lindsay Patterson](#)
- ¹⁴² Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS ES02\)](#)
- ¹⁴³ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS ES20\)](#)
- ¹⁴⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 3
- ¹⁴⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 10
- ¹⁴⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 17
- ¹⁴⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 8
- ¹⁴⁸ Education Scotland (2016) [Submission to the Education and Skills Committee](#) (p6)
- ¹⁴⁹ Dr Lindsay Paterson (2016) [Submission from Dr Lindsay Patterson](#) (p5)
- ¹⁵⁰ Dr Lindsay Paterson (2016) [Submission from Dr Lindsay Patterson](#) (p5)
- ¹⁵¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 24
- ¹⁵² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 23
- ¹⁵³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 12
- ¹⁵⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 25
- ¹⁵⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 26
- ¹⁵⁶ Education Scotland (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p4)
- ¹⁵⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 38
- ¹⁵⁸ Education Scotland (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p3)
- ¹⁵⁹ Education and Skills Committee (2016) [Anonymous \(PBS ES19\)](#)
- ¹⁶⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 32
- ¹⁶¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 32
- ¹⁶² Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 8
- ¹⁶³ OECD (2015) [Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective](#) (p19)
- ¹⁶⁴ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 30
- ¹⁶⁵ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Cols 6-7
- ¹⁶⁶ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 7
- ¹⁶⁷ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Col 7
- ¹⁶⁸ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 30 November 2016 Cols 42-47
- ¹⁶⁹ Education Scotland (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p4)
- ¹⁷⁰ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 14 December 2016 Cols 33-34
- ¹⁷¹ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 14 December 2016 Col 35
- ¹⁷² SQA (2016) [Letter to the Education and Skills Committee \(16 December 2016\)](#) (p10)
- ¹⁷³ Education and Skills Committee, *Official Report*, 14 December 2016 Col 36

Annexe A

Budget Scrutiny 2016: survey analysis

Introduction

As part of its pre-budget scrutiny the Committee is looking at four public bodies in the field of education.

- Skills Development Scotland
- Scottish Funding Council
- Education Scotland
- Scottish Qualifications Agency

Part of the evidence taking included running a short on-line survey during October 2016. This paper summarises the results of the four surveys. It compares the perceived connection between organisation function and National Outcomes before analysing results for each organisation separately.

In addition to this survey the Committee is also collecting evidence in the form of visits, an informal meeting with teachers in the Parliament, written submissions and oral evidence.

In considering the results of the survey it should be noted that it is not based on a random sample, so may not be representative of the general population.

The online survey ran from 2nd October to 1st November. It was disseminated via Twitter and facebook and promoted to teachers through the Parliament's Education Service newsletter which goes to several thousand teachers. Parliament staff also asked trade unions, the Scottish Youth Parliament and parent groups to distribute the survey to their members.

The survey was also sent to the political correspondents at BBC, Scotsman, Herald, TESS, Third Force News and Holyrood.

Respondents

A total of 1,171 responses were received across all four surveys. More than half of these (646 responses) were for the SQA survey. A further 340 were for the Education Scotland survey. Most responses were from teachers. Parents made up 7% (87) of all responses, and pupils/student/trainees, 6% (74).

Figure1: Respondents by type

	SQA		Education Scotland		SDS		SFC	
Teachers	462	71%	211	62%	20	20%	24	30%
College lecturers/academic staff/training provider	46	7%	38	11%	11	11%		
Parent	42	6%	31	9%	14	14%	n/a	
Pupil/student/trainee	51	8%	11	3%	12	12%	13	16%
Other	45	7%	49	14%	45	44%	46	55%
All responses	646		340		102		83	

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Contribution to National Outcomes

All four surveys included questions on the extent to which certain functions of each organisation contributed to the Scottish Government's National Outcomes.

A weak link with National Outcomes does not necessarily imply a negative view of the organisation's performance.

It should also be noted that each survey had very different numbers of people responding, from 646 respondents to the SQA survey to 83 respondents on colleges and universities (SFC survey) (see figure 1).

National Outcome: Our young people are more successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

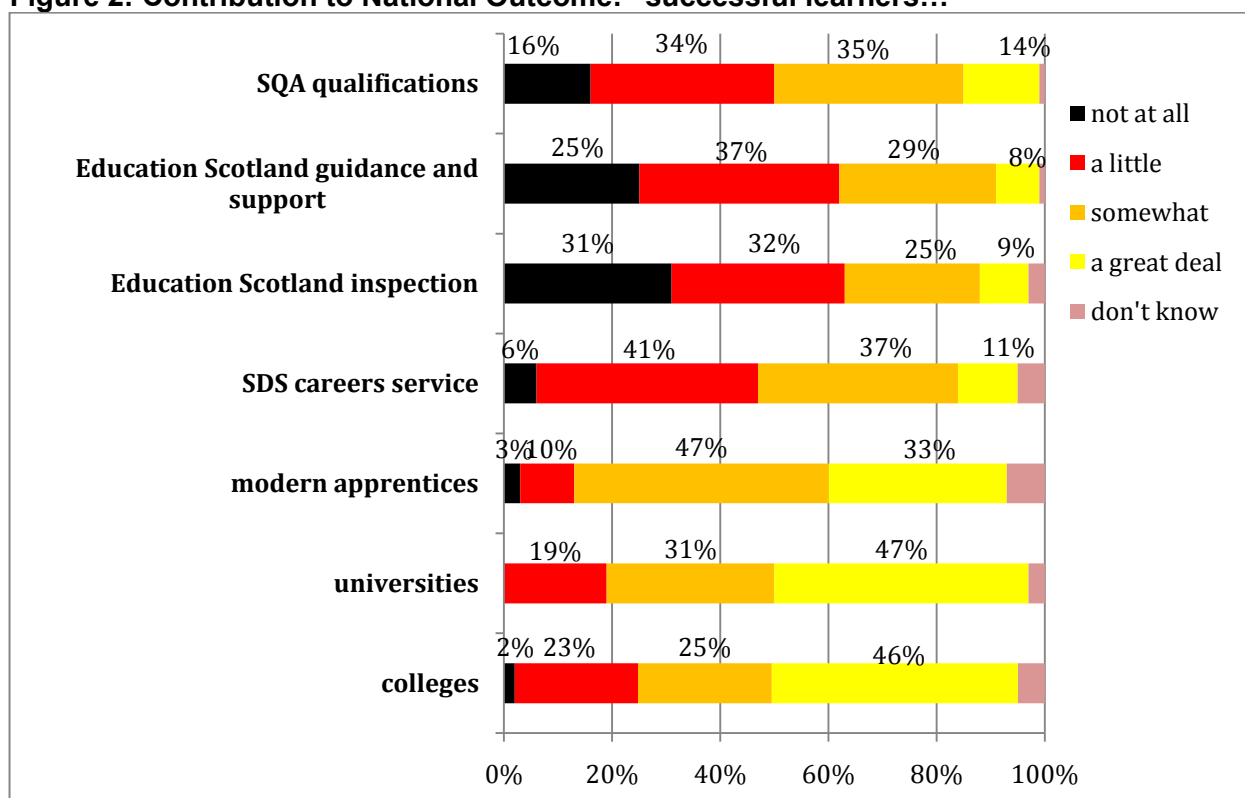
Colleges and Universities were considered to contribute well to this National Outcome. Nearly half of the people responding felt that these institutions contributed 'a great deal.' (47% of the 64 responses on universities and 46% of the 57 responses on colleges).

To a slightly lesser degree, the Modern Apprenticeship programme was also perceived as being well-connected to the National Outcome with around a third of the 30 people responding saying it contributed 'a great deal'.

In contrast, Education Scotland inspections, guidance and support were not perceived to contribute greatly to this National Outcome. For example 63% of the 222 people responding thought that Education Scotland inspections contributed 'not at all' or 'a little.'

SQA qualifications and the SDS career service attracted more mixed opinion. Of the 618 responses to this question on SQA, just over half considered that SQA qualifications contributed 'somewhat' or 'a great deal.' A similarly even split is seen in the much lower number of people responding on the SDS careers' service, where 48% of the 65 respondents considered it contributed 'somewhat' or 'a great deal' to this National Outcome.

Figure 2: Contribution to National Outcome: “successful learners...”



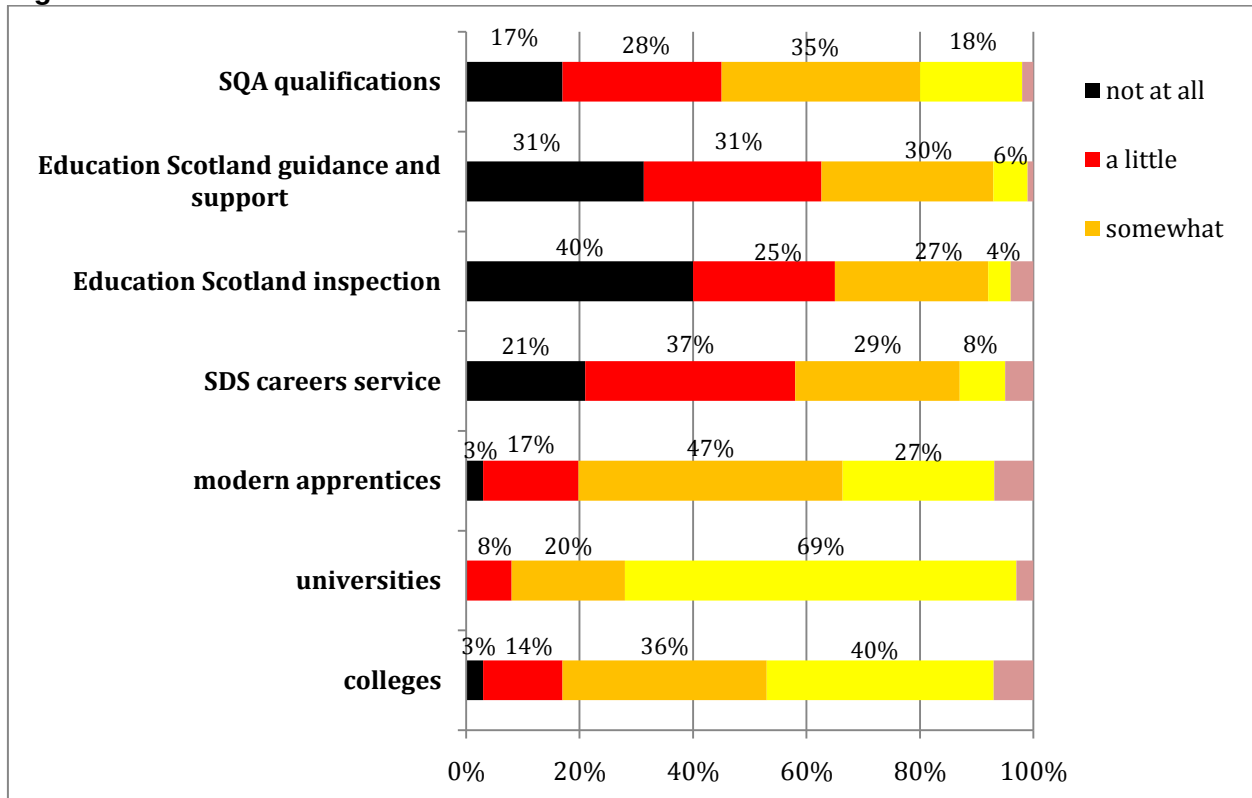
National Outcome: We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.

Similarly to the previous question, colleges and universities were considered to have the closest connection to this national outcome. 69% of 64 people responding considered that Universities contributed “a great deal.” Modern Apprenticeships were also perceived to have a strong connection to this National Outcome with almost three quarters of the 30 respondents saying it contributed “somewhat” or “a great deal.”

In contrast, Education Scotland inspections, guidance and support were perceived to make little or no contribution to this National Outcome. 65% of the 222 responses on inspection and 62% of the 238 responses on “support and guidance” considered that these made little or no contribution to “being better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.”

Perceptions of SQA qualifications’ contribution were mixed, with 45% of 618 respondents saying they contributed “not at all” or “a little” and 53% saying they contributed “somewhat” or “a great deal.”

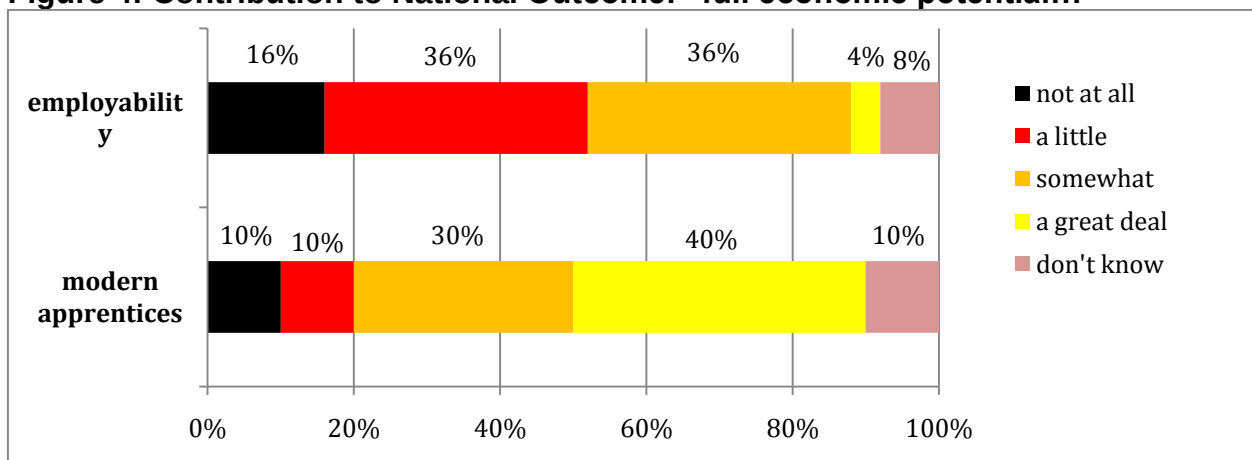
Figure 3: Contribution to National Outcome: “better educated...”



National Outcome: We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.

The survey also asked about a third National Outcome in relation to SDS modern apprenticeships and the employability fund. While 40% of 30 respondents thought that modern apprenticeships contributed ‘a great deal’ to this outcome, the 25 responses for the employability fund were more mixed.

Figure 4: Contribution to National Outcome: “full economic potential...”



Skills Development Scotland

In addition to asking about National Outcomes (reported above), the survey used statements from the SDS Operating Plan 2016-17 to ascertain further views of modern apprenticeships and the employability fund.

Modern Apprenticeships

The [SDS Operating Plan 2016/17](#) describes Modern Apprenticeships as:

“a successful approach to work based learning that enables businesses to train new entrants and existing employees to industry-recognised standards”

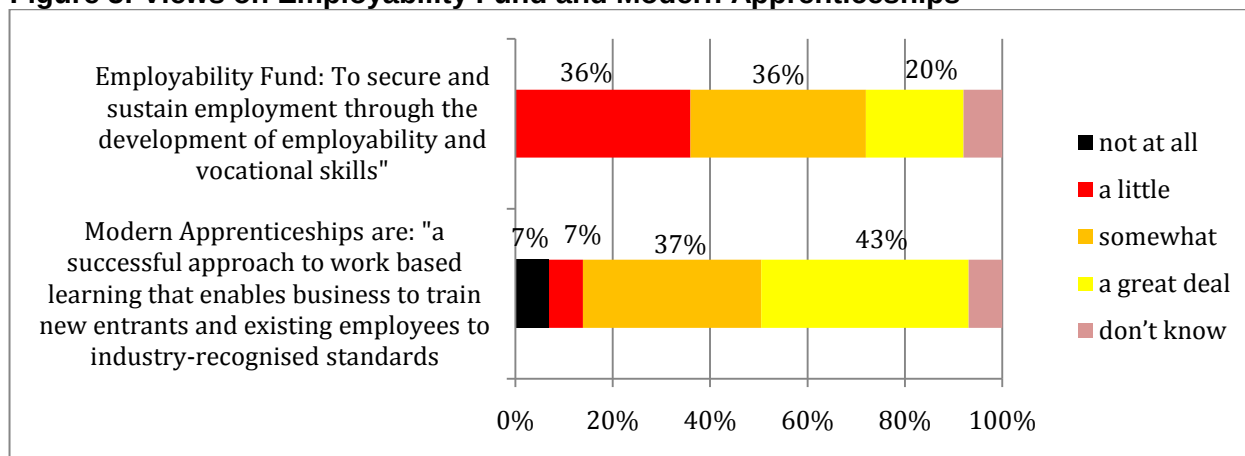
The 30 respondents were positive about this description with 43% (13 respondents) agreeing “a great deal.”

The Employability Fund:

The survey asked to what extent the Employability Fund “secure(s) and sustain(s) employment through the development of employability and vocational skills.” This description was also taken from the SDS Operating Plan 2016/17.

Overall, the 25 respondents were ambivalent about the degree to which the Employability Fund helped to “secure and sustain employment through the development of employability and vocational skills.” Around a third (9 responses) considered the fund contributed ‘a little’ to this and the same number, considered it contributed ‘somewhat.’

Figure 5: Views on Employability Fund and Modern Apprenticeships



Universities and Colleges (Scottish Funding Council)

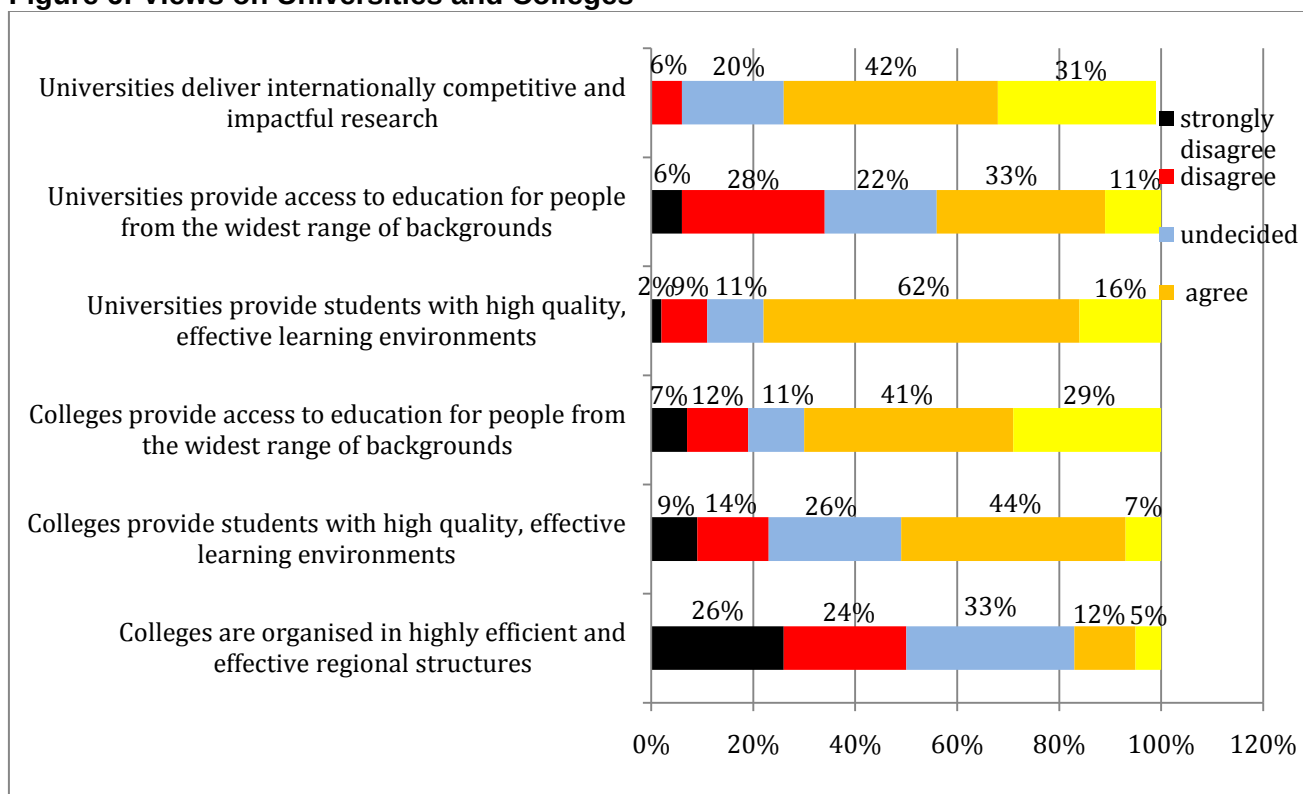
In addition to asking about National Outcomes (reported above), the survey asked about the degree to which respondents agreed to statements about universities and colleges. These statements were taken from the most recent [Ministerial letter of guidance to the SFC](#).

It should be noted that the questions were asked about universities and colleges rather than the Scottish Funding Council itself. There were 64 responses on universities and 58 on colleges.

Views of universities were generally positive, although around a third (34%) disagreed or disagreed strongly that “universities offer access to education to people from the widest range of backgrounds.”

Views of colleges were also generally positive, with the notable exception that half of respondents (29) disagreed or disagreed strongly that “colleges are organised in highly efficient and effective regional structures” and a further third were undecided on this issue.

Figure 6: Views on Universities and Colleges



Scottish Qualifications Authority

In addition to asking about National Outcomes (reported above), the survey asked about statements taken from the “Values” and “Approach” in the [SQA Corporate Plan 2016-19](#).

646 responses were received, 293 of them from classroom teachers and 169 from teachers in promoted posts, deputes or head teachers. There were not very large differences in responses by respondent type and so separate results have not been reported here. Almost all respondents had experience of National Qualifications (93%) and around a fifth had experience of ‘Skills for Work.’ Other qualifications were less well known although 13% had experience of HNC/HNDs and 10% of SVQs.

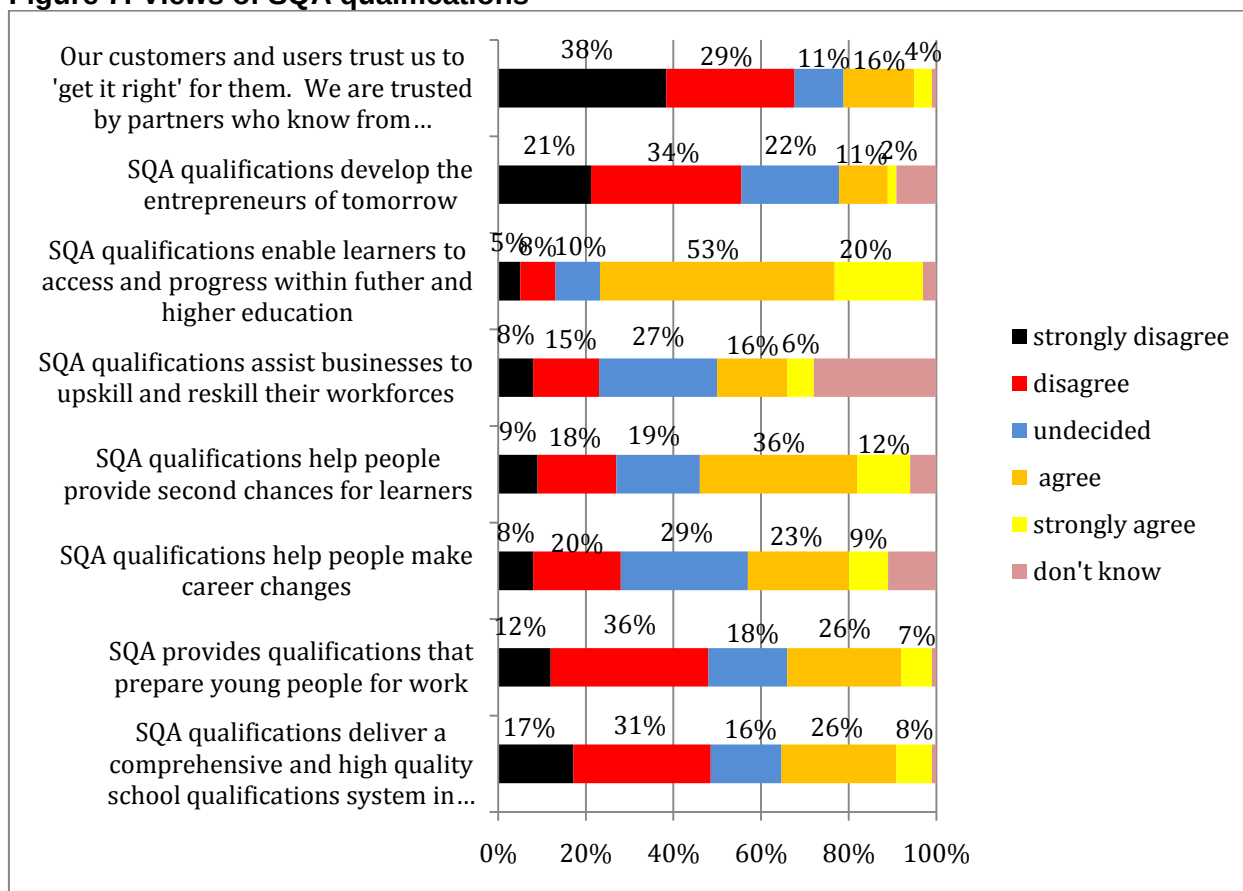
Nearly three quarters (73%) of respondents agreed or agreed strongly that SQA qualifications enable learners to access and progress within further and higher education.

However, survey respondents expressed little trust in the SQA. Around two thirds (67%) disagreed or disagreed strongly that “our customers and users trust us to get it right for themⁱ.”

Around half of respondents disagreed or disagreed strongly that SQA qualifications “deliver a comprehensive and high quality school qualifications system” (48%) and a further 16% were undecided. Similar opinions were expressed about whether SQA provides qualifications that prepare young people for work.

ⁱ Corporate Plan “Values” include: We seek to be trusted by government and stakeholders to deliver on our statutory responsibilities. Our customers and users trust us to ‘get it right’ for them. We seek to be trusted by partners who know from experience that we deliver.

Figure 7: Views of SQA qualifications



Education Scotland

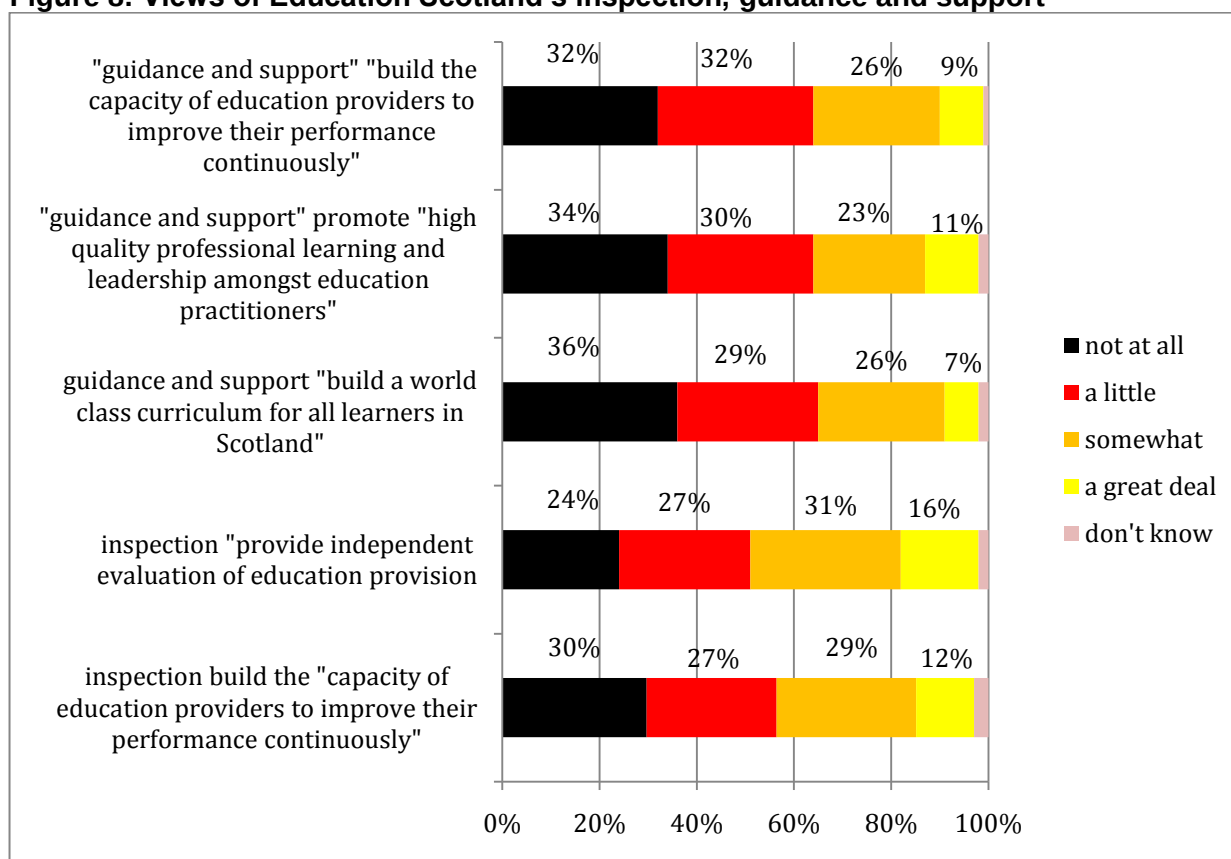
In addition to asking about National Outcomes (reported above), the survey asked about the degree to which respondents thought inspections, guidance and support contributed to four of [Education Scotland's six strategic goals](#).

There were 340 responses to this survey, 143 from classroom teachers and 68 from teachers in promoted posts, deputies or head teachers. There were not very large differences in responses by respondent type and so separate results have not been reported here.

Around a third of respondents considered that Education Scotland's "guidance and support" did not contribute at all to; building a world class curriculum (36%), improving performance (32%) or promoting high quality professional learning (34%). A similar proportion (30%) of respondents did not consider that inspections improved performance.

Views on the independence of inspections were more mixed – with 51% considering they contributed "not at all" or "a little" to providing independent evaluation of the education system, while 47% considered that they contributed "somewhat" or "a great deal."

Figure 8: Views of Education Scotland's inspection, guidance and support



Camilla Kidner
SPICE
3rd November 2016

Annexe B

Extracts from the minutes of the Education and Skills Committee and associated submissions and correspondence

3rd Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 7 September 2016

2. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed to take items 5 and 6 of this meeting in private. The Committee agreed to take reviews of sectoral overview evidence in private at the meetings on 14, 21 and 28 September 2016.

6. Approach to budget scrutiny (in private): The Committee agreed its approach to budget scrutiny.

5th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 21 September 2016

2. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed to take item 5 in private.

5. Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 (in private): The Committee agreed engagement and media plans for advance scrutiny of the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2017-18.

8th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 26 October 2016

1. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed to take item 3 in private. The Committee also agreed consideration of its work programme should be taken in private at its next meeting, and reviews of pre-budget scrutiny evidence sessions should be taken in private at future meetings.

10th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 9 November 2016

1. Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 - Skills Development Scotland: The Committee took evidence from— Damien Yeates, Chief Executive, Danny Logue, Operations Director, Gordon McGuinness, Director of Industry & Enterprise Networks, and Katie Hutton, Director of National Training Programmes, Skills Development Scotland. During the session, the Convener noted that Colin Beattie and Liz Smith were attending a fact-finding visit with the Scottish Funding Council on behalf of the Committee as part of its pre-budget scrutiny.

2. Review of evidence (in private): The Committee discussed the evidence heard earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed to write to SDS with some supplementary questions on issues raised in submissions to the Committee. The Committee also agreed to write to the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce highlighting some of the comments made in evidence to the Committee by SDS. Finally, the Committee discussed themes for inclusion in its budget report.

Submission

 [Skills Development Scotland \(3.5MB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

-  [Letter from OCG in relation to 9 November Committee meeting \(92KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Letter from the Convener to Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce \(17 November 2016\) \(44KB\)](#)
-  [Letter from the Convener to SDS \(17 November 2016\) \(55KB\)](#)
-  [Letter from Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce \(9 December 2016\) \(625KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Letter from SDS \(12 December 2016 \) \(375KB pdf\)](#)

Other Submissions

-  [Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce \(59KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Auditor General for Scotland \(comments on SDS from p2\) \(132KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations \(243KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Colleges Scotland \(73KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group \(390KB pdf\)](#)
-  [CBI Scotland \(211KB pdf\)](#)
-  [SOLACE Scotland \(258KB pdf\)](#)

Survey Results

 [SPICe Briefing with online survey results \(399KB pdf\)](#)

11th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 16 November 2016

3. Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 - Scottish Funding Council: The Committee took evidence from—Dr John Kemp, Interim Chief Executive, Dr Stuart Fancey, Director of Research and Innovation, and Lorna MacDonald, Director of Finance, Scottish Funding Council. The Committee also asked the Scottish Funding Council for its position on legislative consent memorandum LCM (S5) 4 on the Higher Education and Research Bill.

5. Review of Evidence (in private): The Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Funding Council and the Auditor General for Scotland on issues raised in evidence. It also agreed to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work to give evidence to the Committee on the Enterprise and Skills Review.

Submissions

 [Scottish Funding Council \(615KB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

 [Letter to Scottish Funding Council - 24 November 2016 \(118KB pdf\)](#)
 [Letter from Scottish Funding Council - 14 December 2016 \(912KB pdf\)](#)
 [Letter to the Auditor General for Scotland - 24 November 2016 \(101KB pdf\)](#)
 [Letter from the Auditor General for Scotland - 16 December 2016 \(487KB pdf\)](#)

Other Submissions

 [Scottish Funding Council - additional submission \(depreciation briefing\) \(403KB pdf\)](#)
 [University of St Andrews Students' Association \(13KB pdf\)](#)
 [QAA Scotland \(34KB pdf\)](#)
 [Auditor General for Scotland \(237KB pdf\)](#)
 [Universities Scotland \(141KB pdf\)](#)
 [University and College Union \(108KB pdf\)](#)
 [Colleges Scotland \(73KB pdf\)](#)
 [University of Strathclyde \(438KB pdf\)](#)
 [NUS Scotland \(105KB pdf\)](#)
 [Glasgow Caledonian University \(285KB pdf\)](#)
 [The Royal Society of Edinburgh \(432KB pdf\)](#)
 [Heriot-Watt University \(1.3MB pdf\)](#)
 [North East Scotland College \(494KB pdf\)](#)
 [University of the West of Scotland \(595KB pdf\)](#)
 [Universities Scotland - supplementary submission \(143KB pdf\)](#)

Survey Results

 [SPICe Briefing with online survey results \(399KB pdf\)](#)

SPICe Briefing on ONS Reclassification of Colleges

 [SPICe Briefing \(191KB pdf\)](#)

Visit to Queen Margaret University

 [Note of Committee visit to QMU - 9 November 2016 \(136KB pdf\)](#)

12th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 23 November 2016

2. Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 - Scottish Qualifications Authority: The Committee took evidence from— Dr Janet Brown, Chief Executive, and Linda Ellison, Director of Finance, Scottish Qualifications Authority.

3. Review of Evidence (in private): The Committee discussed the evidence heard earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed to write to the SQA on issues raised during the session, and to highlight this letter to the Scottish Government.

4. Work programme (in private): The Committee considered its work programme. The Committee agreed: the session on the Enterprise and Skills' Bodies Review on December 7 with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work will look at the impact on the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland; to receive an informal briefing from Audit Scotland on their 2014 School Education report and the progress since then to inform the future session with education authority representatives; to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to give evidence on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget on 21 December; and to defer the consideration of the rest of its work programme, including further discussions in relation to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, to its next meeting.

Submissions from witnesses

 [Scottish Qualifications Authority \(313KB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

 [Letter from the Convener to the SQA - 30 November 2016 \(132KB pdf\)](#)

 [Letter from the SQA - 16 December 2016 \(833KB pdf\)](#)

Other Submissions

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA01\) \(13KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA02\) \(13KB pdf\)](#)

 [J Samson \(20KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA04\) \(22KB pdf\)](#)

 [S Cunningham \(13KB pdf\)](#)

 [E. Robinson \(16KB pdf\)](#)

 [Dr Lindsay Paterson \(62KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA08\) \(11KB pdf\)](#)

 [Prof Mark Priestley \(150KB pdf\)](#)

-  [Auditor General for Scotland \(Comments on SQA on p2\) \(132KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Colleges Scotland \(73KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA12\) \(18KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA13\) \(31KB pdf\)](#)
-  [A Riddell \(13KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA15\) \(10KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Educational Institute Scotland \(27KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA17\) \(14KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA18\) \(21KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA19\) \(18KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA20\) \(16KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA21\) \(16KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA22\) \(16KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Scottish Association of Geography Teachers \(222KB pdf\)](#)
-  [National Parent Forum of Scotland \(188KB pdf\)](#)
-  [North East Scotland College \(150KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Scottish Youth Parliament \(252KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA26\) \(212KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA27\) \(12KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Margaret Telfer \(73KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA28\) \(174KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA30\) \(25KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA31\) \(70KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Royal Scottish Geographical Society \(8KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA32\) \(71KB pdf\)](#)
-  [The Royal Society of Edinburgh \(425KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA34\) \(8KB pdf\)](#)
-  [A Rural School \(163KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA36\) \(151KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA37\) \(162KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA38\) \(210KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA39\) \(11KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA40\) \(15KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS SQA41\) \(175KB pdf\)](#)

Survey Results

-  [SPICe Briefing with online survey results \(399KB pdf\)](#)

Visit to Scottish Qualifications Authority

-  [Note of Committee visit to SQA - 16 November 2016 \(77KB pdf\)](#)

Note of meeting with a group of teachers

 [Note of a meeting of a group of teachers and James Dornan MSP and Ross Greer MSP \(5 October 2016\) \(26KB pdf\)](#)

13th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 30 November 2016

1. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed its consideration of evidence taken from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work on 7 December should be taken in private at that meeting.

3. Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 - Education Scotland: The Committee took evidence from— Dr Bill Maxwell, Chief Executive, Alastair Delaney, Chief Operating Officer, and Graeme Logan, Strategic Director, Education Scotland.

4. Review of Evidence (in private): The Committee discussed the evidence heard earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed to write to Education Scotland on a number of issues during the evidence session. It also agreed to seek a committee debate in the Chamber on its pre-budget scrutiny.

Submission

 [Education Scotland \(258KB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

 [Letter from the Convener to Education Scotland - 30 November 2016 \(105KB pdf\)](#)

 [Letter from Education Scotland - 16 December 2016 \(437KB pdf\)](#)

Other Submissions

 [D Robertson \(31KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS ES02\) \(13KB pdf\)](#)

 [Dr Lindsay Paterson \(62KB pdf\)](#)

 [Prof Mark Priestley \(150KB pdf\)](#)

 [S Cunningham \(10KB pdf\)](#)

 [AHDS \(17KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS S07\) \(17KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS ES08\) \(17KB pdf\)](#)

 [Auditor General for Scotland \(132KB pdf\)](#)

 [Colleges Scotland \(73KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS ES11\) \(18KB pdf\)](#)

 [Reform Scotland \(31KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS ES13\) \(31KB pdf\)](#)

 [A Riddell \(43KB pdf\)](#)

 [Educational Institute Scotland \(39KB pdf\)](#)

-  [Anonymous \(PBS ES13\) \(15KB pdf\)](#)
-  [National Parent Forum of Scotland \(188KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS ES19\) \(129KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Scottish Youth Parliament \(252KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS ES20\) \(146KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Margaret Telfer \(121KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Royal Society of Edinburgh \(435KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Royal Scottish Geographical Society \(8KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Anonymous \(PBS ES23\) \(147KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Letter from Scottish Natural Heritage on climate change and biodiversity in the Curriculum for Excellence \(357KB pdf\)](#)

Survey Results

-  [SPICe Briefing with online survey results \(399KB pdf\)](#)

Note of meeting with a group of teachers

-  [Note of a meeting of a group of teachers and James Dornan MSP and Ross Greer MSP \(5 October 2016\) \(26KB pdf\)](#)

14th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 7 December 2016

2. Enterprise and Skills Review: The Committee took evidence from— Keith Brown, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Hugh McAloon, Head of Youth Employment, and Paul Smart, Head of Colleges, Young Workforce and SFC Sponsorship Division, Scottish Government.

3. Review of Evidence (in private): The Committee considered the evidence heard earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary requesting the evidence that the decision to abolish the SFC board and others was based upon.

Submission

-  [Joint Statement by NUS Scotland, UCU Scotland and Universities Scotland on Enterprise and Skills Review \(372KB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

-  [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary - background evidence received by the Review - 8 December 2016 \(1MB pdf\)](#)
-  [Letter to the Cabinet Secretary on scrutiny of the evidence base for the decision taken at ministerial level during Phase 1 to abolish the Scottish Funding Council board and other boards covered by the Review - 9 December 2016 \(89KB pdf\)](#)

-  [Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work in response to 9 December 2016 letter on scrutiny of the evidence base for the decision taken at ministerial level during Phase 1 to abolish the Scottish Funding Council board and other boards covered by the Review](#)
-  [Letter from Universities Scotland to the Cabinet Secretary in relation to 7 December evidence session, and the Scottish Funding Council - 13 December 2016 \(920KB pdf\)](#)

15th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 14 December 2016

1. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed to take items 3 and 4 in private. The Committee also agreed that, at its next meeting, reviews of evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on both the Draft Budget and on the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry should be taken in private.

2. The Role of Education Authorities: The Committee took evidence from—Councillor Stephanie Primrose, Education, Children and Young People Spokesperson, and Jane O'Donnell, Chief Officer, COSLA; Councillor Jacqueline Henry, Chair of Children and Young People Thematic Board, and Peter Macleod, Director of Children's Services, Renfrewshire Council, Scottish Local Government Partnership.

3. Review of Evidence (in private): The Committee considered the evidence heard earlier in the meeting. The Committee agreed to write to North Lanarkshire Council on the need for Committee members to be able to discuss education with local teachers in their area in order to inform the Committee's ongoing scrutiny.

Submission

-  [Letter from COSLA - 7 December 2016 \(125KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Supplementary information from Audit Scotland on The Role of Education Authorities \(184KB pdf\)](#)

Visit note

-  [Note of visit to Newbattle Community High School - Colin Beattie \(240KB pdf\)](#)

Supplementary Correspondence

-  [Letter from the Convener to the Director of Education, North Lanarkshire Council - 22 December 2016 \(102KB pdf\)](#)
-  [Letter from North Lanarkshire Council - 13 January 2017 \(102KB pdf\)](#)

16th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5) Wednesday 21 December 2016

1. Decision on taking business in private: The Committee agreed to take item 6 in private. The Committee also agreed its consideration of: a draft report on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2017-18; a draft report on a legislative consent memorandum on the Children and Social Work Bill (LCM(S5)7); and the Committee's work programme should be taken in private at its next meeting.

2. Draft Budget Scrutiny 2017-18: The Committee took evidence on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2017-18 from— John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Scottish Government.

4. Review of evidence (in private): The Committee reviewed the evidence heard earlier in the meeting on the Draft Budget.

Written Evidence

 [Universities Scotland - Committee Briefing on Budget \(131KB pdf\)](#)

1st Meeting, 2017 (Session 5) Wednesday 11 January 2017

2. Draft Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 (in private): The Committee considered a draft report to the Finance and Constitution Committee. Various changes were agreed to, and the report was agreed for publication. The Committee also considered a draft report on Performance and Role of Key Education and Skills Bodies. Various changes were agreed to, and the report was agreed for publication.

Debate

The Committee agreed to hold a debate SQA, Education Scotland, SFC and SDS - Performance and Role". The debate took place in the Chamber on Thursday 12 January from 2.30pm.

 [Read the full text of the motion for debate](#)

 [Read the Official Report of the Debate on Thursday 12 January 2017](#)

In advance of the debate, the Committee received the following submissions, which were highlighted to Committee members.

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA 42\) \(72.7KB pdf\)](#)

 [Anonymous \(PBS SQA 43\) \(8KB pdf\)](#)

 [John Samson \(9KB pdf\)](#)

