



SCOTTISH COUNCIL of
DEANS of EDUCATION

Thank you for inviting SCDE to make a response on the issue of progress with plans to reduce class contact time.

I'd like to take this opportunity to set out for the Committee what the objectives of [SCDE](#) are:

Our primary objectives are:

- To nurture high-quality teaching graduates who can critically engage with a range of education settings and diverse learner populations
- contribute robust and relevant research that informs education policy and practice
- To raise public awareness of the contribution of the education profession, from early years to lifelong learning
- To provide a platform to debate and develop strategies for professional learning for education personnel
- To engage in, and build upon, international collaborations to advance educational discourse in a range of areas: e.g., educational leadership; curriculum; research; and policy
- To partner with diverse national and local organisations, to further advance equity and excellence in education
- To anticipate and to engage with developing political, economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns as they affect education

Your query centres upon the proposed reduction in class contact time. Our role in relation to our objectives would be to offer research-informed debate around the merit of teachers having non-class contact time built into their working day. To resource schools so that teachers can have a reduction in class contact time is something that SCDE would support in principle. However, the specific nature of your questions, which centre on logistical and practical issues pertaining to achieving the Government's aim, are not within our remit.

How this initiative could directly impact Teacher Education would relate to our provision, the target numbers allocated to different institutions, and whether we might need to develop new routes into teaching for accreditation with GTCS.

For the year 2026/27, there was a reduction of 5% in numbers for primary (not including Gaelic) and for the year 2025/26 there was a reduction of 10% in numbers for primary. These targets were decided by the Cabinet Secretary for Education based on recommendations from the Teacher Workforce Planning Action Group (TWPAG). There is representation from SCDE on that group and our role on that

committee is to represent the providers of Initial Teacher Education in terms of any impact on changes to target numbers. For example, in the last two years, it was agreed that we could include undergraduate courses in the reduction as well as PGDE courses; using only PGDE courses mean that only a few institutions bore the impact of the reductions. We were asked to agree the reductions among ourselves which we did.

SCDE has, for several years, asked that we might plan student teacher numbers for a longer period than yearly, as we typically do not know our target numbers until we are in the interview period, and our Admissions Departments do not therefore know what final numbers we are aiming for. This is a work in progress. We appreciate that government policy can mean that there are changes beyond planning for demographics, and class contact time or class sizes would be examples of how policy might change and make it difficult to plan for longer cycles.

One area, which you will be aware is challenging, is recruitment to shortage secondary subjects. To encourage more people to apply, the bursary is available and the degree requirements have been dropped to a 2:2 from a 2:1 Honours degree. However, the bursary has dropped from £19,000 to £12,500 per year.

We would anticipate that enabling a reduction in class contact time for these secondary areas would be challenging given how difficult it is to fill the quota of places for the secondary shortage subjects.

SCDE remains willing to enter all relevant discussions with stakeholders to support the development and education of teachers. However, as mentioned above, the issues you have asked us to discuss around how many teachers are employed by local authorities and how teachers are distributed across subjects and geographically are beyond the scope of Initial Teacher Education.

Yours sincerely

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Chair of Scottish Council of Deans of Education



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