Revised Course Specification for National 5 Computing Science

I wish to bring to the committee’s attention the new Course Specification for National 5 Computing Science, foisted upon us last week.

At a time when the benchmarks for Computing Science within the Broad General Education have just been revised, requiring teachers to go back and re-write large chunks of their learning & teaching material, in the secondary school sector for S1-S3, we now have the ridiculous situation that within the Database Design & Development Unit of National 5 Computing Science, pupils are being asked to "read and explain code the makes use of SQL" - this is something which is not even done within year 1 University courses, why is it in a National 5 course? This is now much more challenging for pupils than the current topic is at Higher level.

Within Web Design & Development CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) and HTML has been brought down from Higher also, why?

Because there are no statutory requirements to ensure that secondary pupils are timetabled enough to ensure they have the prerequisite knowledge to start National 5 Computing Science in S4 and the new course is at odds with the new E’s & O’s in computing, the National 5 Computing Science course should be teachable within one year, to allow pupils to gain meaningful learning and valuable skills for work.

There is also the issue of the huge increase in teacher workload, at a time when we were promised a reduction in workload.

Scotland urgently needs our developing work force to have young people leaving school to enter the workplace, further education and higher education with computing science knowledge and skills. These changes will deter pupils from choosing the course initially and that will lead to a further reduction in young people studying a subject the country urgently needs them to do so, more so, when it is likely, as a result of Brexit, that there will be a curb on the number of immigrants with these skills who will be let into the country.

It is urgent that the these changes are put on hold by the SQA for the forthcoming academic session and the SQA engage in real and meaningful consultation with ALL Computing Science teachers in Scotland, so that a realistic, fair course can be developed, which will encourage the uptake of study in Computing Science, thus helping to develop our young workforce.

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