Thank you for your letter of 15 June about the Scottish Government’s plans to tender for a new route into teaching and the relevance of this to your Committee’s report into teacher workforce planning.

In our publication “Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education” we confirmed that we would develop a new route into teaching which would focus on getting high-quality graduates into priority areas and subjects and that this would be in place by 2017-18. We will be going out to tender for this shortly and expect bids from a wide range of providers.

As I made clear in the Scottish Parliament on 14 June, the tender specification will ensure that proposals will require to be certified by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in line with their guidelines for the accreditation of courses of Initial Teacher Education. The tender document will further make clear that the new programme will be developed and delivered in partnership with a university. Both of these requirements will ensure academic rigour, professional credibility and crucially will maintain the quality of the teaching profession.

Given that our tender documentation is still to be finalised and that we will be encouraging innovative bids from a range of potential providers, it is not possible, or appropriate, at this stage to provide further detail on the design of a new route. As discussed, the focus will be on providing a challenging but rewarding route into teaching for high-quality graduates and I expect proposals to attract the very best graduates into the profession. This will not only assist with teacher recruitment but will develop a strong cohort of teachers that have the skills and confidence to contribute effectively throughout our schools.

I hope this helps with the Committee’s work.

JOHN SWINNEY

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