James Dornan MSP
Convener
Education & Skills Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Dornan

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2017 following the Committee’s discussions of 29 March 2017.

The attached appendix contains SQA’s responses to the information requested and I trust you will find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

Dr Janet Brown
Chief Executive
Education and Skills Committee

16 May 2017

Background

On 18 April 2017 the Convener of the Education and Skills Committee wrote to SQA to request:

- an update in relation to pay for markers and invigilators (in light of recent publicity on this and the complexity of the issue); and
- specific evidence of the benefits of your international work and details of any consideration given as to the opportunity cost of pursuing this work.

SQA's response to the request for: an update in relation to pay for markers and invigilators (in light of recent publicity on this and the complexity of the issue);

Markers

All timescales for the recruitment of markers for the 2017 examinations were met and the required number of markers across all marking teams has been achieved. Teachers continue to support our work and just over 1400 new marker applications were received between 1 September 2016 and 28 April 2017. SQA continues to recruit markers beyond the end of April to add to our contingency supply.

Invigilators

SQA has received confirmation from The Poverty Alliance that they were happy with the use of session fees to pay our invigilators. They also confirmed that the Living Wage is calculated across a pay period and the arrangements we have put in place to gather actual hours worked will allow us to ensure, and evidence, that at least the Living Wage has been paid to all invigilators.

We also received positive feedback from HMRC following their audit on appointee fees. During this audit SQA provided evidence from 2016 examinations and invigilation fees paid, and HMRC confirmed that they found no evidence to suggest that we were not paying invigilators at least the Minimum Wage. HMRC also confirmed that they were happy with our session fee pay model.

Senior staff at SQA met with Daniel Johnson MSP at our Lowden office on Monday 23 March 2017. This meeting provided the opportunity for us to share the outcomes of our discussions with The Poverty Alliance and HMRC. Our new fees processing arrangements were also discussed during this meeting.

The information gathered during this year's examinations will be used to inform our approach for future years.

As with markers, all timescales for the recruitment of 6,735 invigilators were met and teams are now established ready to begin the 2017 invigilation process.
SQA’s response to the request for: specific evidence of the benefits of your international work, and details of any consideration given as to the opportunity cost of pursuing this work.

The response to this request is organised in three sections. The first provides a brief overview of the context of SQA’s international work. Section 2 addresses the benefits of our international work and Section 3 provides details of how we consider the opportunity cost of pursuing this work.

1  SQA’s international work – context

SQA and its predecessor bodies have been working internationally for 25 years. This is recognised in the legislation\(^1\) that established the Scottish Qualifications Authority and its functions, and which authorises SQA to carry out its functions outwith Scotland.

SQA provides a wide portfolio of qualifications for Scotland including those for schools, colleges, training providers and employers. Internationally, we restrict our provision to the higher education and vocational sectors. Two types of qualifications predominate. Selected Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/Ds) and bespoke qualifications built for customers – particularly in Oil and Gas. Our international customer base comprises: colleges, training providers, universities and employers.

We also provide a range of services to international governments, agencies and organisations in selected areas of expertise – most recently in framework development, standard setting and qualification design and development.

Our international work covers the main countries and regions of the world – China, South Asia, Europe, Middle East, and the Americas. Many countries we work with, or have worked with, align with those identified for international engagement and co-operation by the Scottish Government including China, India, Sri Lanka, Europe, North America and Africa.

In addition to supporting the Scottish Government’s International Framework, our work provides international leadership and generates contribution to SQA’s finances (thereby reducing dependency on the public purse). International activities, therefore, contribute to four\(^2\) of SQA’s corporate goals agreed with Scottish Government and these, in turn, link to several National Outcomes. Appendix 1 provides details of these goals and the mapping to National Outcomes.

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\(^1\) Education (Scotland) Act 1996
\(^2\) Goals 2, 3, 5 and 6
2 Benefits of our international work

There are a number of benefits to SQA’s international work. Taken in the broadest sense, SQA is playing its part in ‘exporting’ education, a key objective for the Scottish Government. This is recognised as being favourable to Scotland in that it brings wider economic benefits to organisations and businesses in Scotland.

2.1 Business, education organisations and learners

Some examples of the impact of our work are:

- Universities in Scotland benefit from SQA’s provision of HNC/Ds as successful students seek to carry on their studies to degree level. Currently we have formal articulation partnership with seven universities in Scotland, with interest from a further five. There is also a longstanding arrangement between our centre in Muscat, Oman and the University of Stirling, which sees a steady flow of HND students completing their degrees from the University of Stirling in Oman. The success of our agreements that enable SQA HND students to articulate into advanced years of degree programmes in international universities in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada also contributes to widening access for HNC/D students from Scotland.

- Our work on assisting countries with development of national and/or sectoral qualification frameworks has done much to promote the recognition and value of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the work of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership, which provides strong leadership on framework principles and implementation. Learners in Scotland and in countries where frameworks are developed benefit from recognition and mobility as more frameworks are developed throughout the world allowing for easier comparison of qualifications.

- We provide qualifications that set international standards, which aid the mobility of workers, and facilitate Scottish companies’ operations worldwide. In industry sectors such as Oil and Gas, where the supply chains operate globally, this can support Scottish companies when tendering for commercial opportunities abroad. By working with skills bodies such as OPITO (an oil and gas educational and training organisation based in Aberdeen, which develops industry standards) we support the utilisation of global standards.

- Our work generally is used to support and strengthen engagement by other Scottish agencies and organisations such as Scotland Development International, Scottish universities and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership.

- SQA’s international activities are focused on countries/regions that align to the Scottish Government’s International Framework, which in turn links to the economic strategy. SQA’s activities provide ongoing support around these strategies. This is reported to Scottish Government Lifelong Learning Network on a quarterly basis.
As our work is focused on higher and vocational education, it benefits learners in the countries in which we work. This is through providing a route to and through higher education; skilling/upskilling workforces; and assisting in the development of mechanisms such as frameworks that enhance learner opportunities for study and work.

### 2.2 Reputation of Scottish Education

- SQA’s international work has helped to:
  - build its reputation in the higher education and vocational field
  - enhance the reputation of Scottish higher and vocational education
  - promote Scottish higher and vocational education
  - contribute to Scotland’s place on the world stage

- SQA is frequently asked to present to world audiences on our areas of expertise. These opportunities allow us to share, and learn from, best practice, contributing towards a common understanding in education communities. For example, we participate in an annual Study Abroad Forum in China, which hosts a range of international speakers. We have contributed to Commonwealth events and those in emerging economies such as Nepal. These re-inforce the worth and strength of Scotland’s education system.

- Qualifications produced in Scotland have international recognition and value. We see this in the increasing demand for HNC/Ds. It can also be demonstrated in the success of our Diploma to Degree programme, which seeks to establish articulation arrangements between SQA HNC/Ds and degree programmes. We have almost 40 such arrangements in place with universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and the USA. This further complements the strong credentials of Scottish higher education internationally.

- There has been interest in our higher education qualifications in North America, to support degree transition for some of their learners.

- Our success in China has been formally recognised by the Chinese Government through the Ministry of Education’s agency CSCSE, which awarded SQA the ‘Best International Partnership Award’. SQA’s diploma programme in China is the largest foreign higher education programme in China.

- We are the preferred supplier for expertise by many countries. We believe this is because we are trusted to do business with probity and diligence and for our ability to deliver.

- Our international work provides opportunities to demonstrate Scotland as a leader in qualifications, assessment, and higher and vocational education. Not only do we share in best practice but often we are setting the standards that become world standards.
♦ We receive a steady stream of requests to host study visits, often in collaboration with the SCQF Partnership, Scottish universities and colleges, and the British Council. As well as promoting Scotland’s education system, we frequently include visits to Scottish education institutions as part of the visit.

♦ Working in a range of countries has provided new ideas, knowledge and trends. This has been beneficial in ensuring that we take account of developments worldwide to be able to equip Scottish students as global learners and for the roles they will play in future workforces.

♦ Our expertise has been used to help in international development. An example of this was early work with Malawi that came as part of Scottish Government’s international development plan.

♦ Offering selected higher education and vocational qualification has contributed to capacity building/CPD on ways of teaching and assessing, standards of global business and industry – these are embedded in our qualifications.

♦ Scottish learners also benefit from our international activities. For example SQA works co-operatively with a number of key players including Scottish Government, Confucius Classroom, the Scottish China Education Network (SCEN), and the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (Scottish CILT) to promote the uptake of the Chinese language. We have a close and formal partnership with Hanban – the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. Through our partnership with Hanban and Scottish CILT, SQA developed a unique qualification, delivered by Scottish CILT to pupils from Scotland at a Hanban summer camp in China. Successful pupils receive a joint SQA/Hanban qualification.

2.3 Contribution to public purse

♦ SQA’s international work not only recovers costs but also makes a net contribution to SQA’s overall finances. This helps to reduce the dependency on the public purse.

♦ We are extending the reach of qualifications already produced for the Scottish market thereby maximising the return on investment and increasing the net contribution to SQA’s finances.

3 Details of how we consider the opportunity cost of pursuing our international work

♦ We have a robust governance process to ensure all costs and opportunity costs are considered before entering markets, pursuing opportunities, or responding to requests.

♦ SQA has a range of governance groups that consider opportunity costs (impact and risks) at different stages of evaluating opportunities, thus providing a robust system of checks and balances. This includes the following:
− Business Case Group
− Product and Service Group
− SQA’s Executive Management Team approve any operation in a new market

− SQA’s Board of Management has an established sub-committee – the International and Commercial Committee – to provide advice on international work and report back to the Board on all matters.

♦ We are clear at the outset what work is in scope for our activities, ie we only consider qualification provision in higher education and vocational sectors and work that lies within our main areas of expertise.

♦ Within SQA, the qualifications and operations for the annual school diet of qualifications has a discrete staff resource from other qualification or service developments. This separation also applies to staff engaged in the development and delivery of vocational qualifications that are offered in colleges and training providers across Scotland and form part of Modern Apprenticeship frameworks and Foundation Apprenticeships.

♦ Net contribution is a deciding factor when assessing opportunities so we can ensure we are not taking financial resource from elsewhere in the organisation but are adding to it.

♦ Other opportunity costs are considered under ‘Impact’ and ‘Risks’ in our business case processes. This includes negative impact and risks to other parts of the business. Business cases would not progress if there was a negative impact or risk to the delivery of the annual school diet of qualifications. Negative impacts or risks to other parts of the organisation would be evaluated against mitigating factors.
APPENDIX 1: SQA’S CORPORATE GOALS AND MAPPING TO NATIONAL OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Outcomes</th>
<th>2017-20 SQA Strategic Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We live in Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe</td>
<td>Develop and deliver high quality qualifications, products and services for the benefits of learners and of Scotland.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people</td>
<td>Provide leadership and expertise in a range of areas including assessment, qualification development and quality enhancement.</td>
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<td>We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation</td>
<td>Support the Scottish Government’s internationalisation agenda to maximise the benefits of international engagement and co-operation.</td>
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<td>Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens</td>
<td>Ensure our culture and values support the engagement and wellbeing of our staff and foster their commitment to the success of SQA.</td>
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<td>Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed</td>
<td>Deliver high-quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive services to our customers.</td>
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<td>We live longer healthier lives</td>
<td>Continue to develop SQA as a leading public body and key player in the skills, training and education landscape.</td>
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<td>We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society</td>
<td>Continue to pursue a longer-term business model that would enable SQA to reduce its dependency on the public purse, and invest in and improve the education and skills system.</td>
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<td>We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk</td>
<td>Independently accredit, quality assure and regulate approved Awarding Bodies and qualifications thereby safeguarding the interests of learners, employers, parents, funding bodies, providers and the Scottish Government.</td>
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<tr>
<td>We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger</td>
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<td>We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need</td>
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<td>We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others</td>
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<td>We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations</td>
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<td>We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity</td>
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<td>We reduce the local and global environmental impact of consumption and production</td>
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<td>Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs</td>
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