

T: 0300 244 4000

E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Douglas Ross MSP

Convener

Education, Children and Young People Committee

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

(by email)

Email: ECYP.committee@parliament.scot

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INTRODUCTION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Dear Convener,

I am pleased to advise that the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill (“the TET Bill”) was introduced to the Scottish Parliament yesterday and is now available on the Scottish Parliament website: [Tertiary Education and Training \(Funding and Governance\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#).

This afternoon, I made a statement to the Scottish Parliament about the Bill and updated the Parliament on progress with the wider post-school education and skills reform programme. I am writing to you as I anticipate that the Education, Children and Young People Committee will be assigned the lead committee for this Bill. I thought it might be helpful to recap briefly the points I made in my statement.

On 22 January, we announced that we were proceeding with the proposal to simplify the post-school funding body landscape by consolidating all post-school provision funding within the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and all student support funding within the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). This decision was informed by what stakeholders told us through our public consultation and a careful and analytical assessment of the options; options designed to put the learner at the centre. Indeed, our whole education and skills system must work as a single system that is easy to navigate, where everyone takes responsibility to deliver excellence for all. This is the Scottish Government’s vision for reform across early years, schools and the tertiary sector.

The Bill delivers simplification by giving the SFC responsibility for securing the provision of National Training Programmes, apprenticeships and work-based learning. This enables the consolidation of responsibility for provision at the SFC.

The Bill establishes, for the first time, a statutory framework for apprenticeships in Scotland. It also gives Ministers the power to commission the SFC to deliver new National Training Programmes. We have also taken the opportunity afforded by the Bill to make improvements to the SFC's governance arrangements and how it oversees tertiary education. This includes having a greater focus on the needs and interests of learners.

Finally, the Bill creates a process for the designation of private providers for the purposes of student support.

The introduction of the Bill is a significant milestone for the post-school education and skills reform programme and a key step in simplifying the tertiary education funding body landscape.

The Bill does not make provision to move further education student support funding from the SFC to SAAS, as this can be done administratively. This means we can progress at pace and work to transfer responsibilities has already begun at SAAS and the SFC. I want to be clear that there will be no immediate change to funding arrangements for college, or university, students but bringing student support responsibilities together unlocks opportunities for improvements.

The Bill, and the changes to student support, will help us: to deliver the best service we can for learners and employers; to make things simpler for colleges, universities, training providers and employers; and to get maximum value from public expenditure.

Turning to the wider post-school education and skills reform programme, that reform is about more than the individual parts of the system. It is about the whole system working together. The Bill is just one component of this.

Work is underway to reform and improve our apprenticeship offer. The Bill lays the foundations for apprenticeship reform and enables improvement but leaves room to develop the detail of future apprenticeship policy with stakeholders. Employer engagement is critical to the success of these reforms so we are building a dedicated employer network to guide this work. We are sharpening the focus of the Apprenticeship Approvals Group and the Standards and Frameworks Group, ensuring they play a vital role in the apprenticeship development cycle. We will need the help of these groups and other stakeholders to put in place the new apprenticeship committee of the SFC, for which provision is made in the Bill.

The Bill makes provision for apprenticeship certificates to help apprentices demonstrate that they have gained the relevant training, experience and qualifications. This connects with work already underway to understand fully the qualifications landscape in tertiary education as part of ensuring we have up to date, accessible qualifications fit for learners at all stages of their lives.

Tertiary education and training must deliver the skills that employers need. I have engaged extensively with Ministerial colleagues across the Scottish Government and with our key stakeholders to develop our approach to skills planning. We have been working closely with the SFC and SDS, and bringing together employers, colleges,

universities, and other key partners, to ensure the approach we take is rooted in evidence of what works and what is needed. A few weeks ago, I met again with the Regional Economic Partnership Network, where we had a good discussion about skills planning across regions. We still have work to do, but I am pleased with the progress we have made.

High quality careers advice is essential to getting the right people into the right jobs, tackling poverty and growing the economy. Good careers advice and support is also vital in schools to help young people realise their potential. We will shortly be announcing new arrangements for the Career Services Collaborative. The outgoing Interim Chair, secretariat and all members of the Collaborative have achieved much since the Collaborative's formation. Their work forms a great base for progressing to the next phase and I look forward to updating the committee on the new arrangements.

The Scottish Government cannot deliver the changes in the Bill, or the wider reform programme, alone. We will continue to work collaboratively with our public bodies, institutions, training providers, employers and learners.

I look forward to working on this important piece of legislation with you, the Committee and other members of the Scottish Parliament over the coming months to make this Bill a success and to ensure that we deliver positive outcomes for learners and employers across Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Deay', written in a cursive style.

GRAEME DEY MSP

Minister for Higher Education, Further Education; and Minister for Veterans