

Education, Children and Young People Committee

**16th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday 24
May 2023**

International Learning Exchange Schemes

Committee meeting

The Committee has had a long-standing interest in Erasmus+ and the various replacement international learning exchange schemes which have been put in place across the UK.

This morning, the Committee will hear evidence from Taith, the scheme currently in operation in Wales.

The Committee will also hear evidence from YouthLink Scotland, to explore the impact withdrawal from Erasmus+ has had on youth work across Scotland, and what its hopes are for the Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP).

Supporting information

A SPICe briefing is included in [Annexe A](#) of this paper.

The Committee has received a letter from the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans providing an update on SEEP which is included at [Annexe B](#).

The Committee has also sought the views of the Turing Scheme, Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland on this issue and requested written submissions. Any submissions received following publication of the Committee papers will be circulated to Members early next week.

**Education, Children and Young People Committee Clerking Team
19 May 2023**

Annexe A



Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 24 May (Session 6)

International exchange programmes

Introduction

The Committee will hold an evidence session on international exchange programmes. Members will hear from Taith and YouthLink Scotland.

YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work organisations. Its members include voluntary and statutory youth work organisations from every local authority in Scotland.

Youth work organisations were eligible to apply for funding under the Erasmus+ scheme. Under the UK Government's Turing Scheme, youth work organisations are required to apply in partnership with schools, further education or vocational education and training providers.

Taith – Welsh for 'journey' - is the Welsh international student exchange programme set up following the UK's withdrawal from Erasmus+. Funded by the Welsh Government, Taith is open to learners and staff in adult education; further and vocational education; higher education; schools; and youth work. Participating organisations in Wales can invite international partners and learners to study, train, volunteer or work in Wales.

This briefing has been organised into two main sections. The first section looks at the Erasmus+ scheme and the second section looks at UK student mobility programmes post-Brexit.

Erasmus +

Erasmus+ is an EU exchange programme supporting education, training, youth and sport. Erasmus has been running for 35 years and continues to grow. The 2021-27 programme has a budget of around €26.2 billion; this is almost double the funding of the 2014-2020 programme.

A report from the House of Lords European Union Committee in 2019 found that [over half of all UK students studying abroad were enrolled in the scheme](#). The report also found between 2014 and 2018, 4,846 Erasmus+ grants were awarded to UK organisations, worth around €680 million.

The Erasmus+ programme has actions which underpin it:

- Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals;
- Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions; and
- Key Action 3: Support for policy reform.
- Jean Monnet Actions in education and training.

Further information is available on the [European Commission's website](#).

EU Member States [participate fully in the Erasmus+ Programme](#). There are also non-member state 'third countries' associated to the programme. Third countries associated to the programme are: members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) that are members of the European Economic Area (EEA); and acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates.

In addition, several third countries are not associated to the programme. These countries take part in certain actions of the Programme. A list of third countries can be [found on the European Commission's website](#).

The UK is currently one of seven countries not associated to Erasmus+.

National agencies manage delivery of the programme within participating countries. The UK Government's Department for Education previously managed the programme in the UK, supported by the British Council and Ecorys.

UK withdrawal from Erasmus+

In the years leading up to the UK's exit from the EU, retaining access to EU programmes such as Erasmus+ was a priority for the higher education sector. [Universities Scotland raised concern](#) that a successor scheme would be "inferior". [Universities UK also called](#) for the UK to continue participating. [The Russell Group](#), representing UK research universities including the University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow, highlighted the importance of Erasmus+ for students.

YouthLink Scotland ran the [Keep Erasmus Plus campaign](#), calling on MPs and MSPs to support continued participation in the scheme. YouthLink Scotland highlighted the importance of Erasmus+ in its response to the UK Parliament Education Committee's 2016 inquiry into the impact of exiting the EU on higher education. In the submission, YouthLink stated that Erasmus+ often benefited those furthest away from education the most, with 10% of Erasmus+ funding ring-fenced for the youth strand.

“Erasmus+ funding has allowed young people, who might otherwise not have the opportunity, to participate in an international exchange. A number of our members involved in international youth work exchanges have noted the impact on young people in the case studies presented here. Through engaging in youth work, young people are more resilient, optimistic for the future, consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control.” – [YouthLink Scotland inquiry response, 7/12/16](#)

In the run up to Brexit, the Scottish and Welsh Governments [called for the UK to remain a member of the programme](#). The Scottish Parliament's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee [also recommended continuation of membership](#). The UK Government's February 2020 [Future Relationship document](#) stated that participation would be considered “provided the terms are in the UK's interests.”

However, a deal was not reached on continued participation and the UK no longer takes part. The Prime Minister [described leaving Erasmus+ as a “tough decision”](#) citing the cost of the programme – [estimated by the UK Government to be around £2bn over six years](#) – as a factor.

Following the UK Government's announcement of withdrawal from Erasmus+, [in January 2021 a joint statement was issued](#) by then-Further and Higher Education Minister Richard Lochhead and then-Welsh Minister for Education Kirsty Williams. This stated that the Scottish and Welsh Governments would explore how Scotland and Wales could “continue to enjoy the benefits offered by Erasmus+”.

Also in January 2021, 145 Members of the European Parliament [wrote to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel](#) calling for the Commission to allow Scotland and Wales to have continued participation in Erasmus+. In February 2021, Ursula von der Leyen replied to the letter stating:

“As one constituent nation of the UK, association to Erasmus+ is not possible for Scotland, separately. The only possibility for the UK is to associate as a whole, or not at all” – [Politico news report, 16/02/2021](#)

In 2022, the Welsh Government launched the Taith international learning exchange programme. The Scottish Government has said it will replace Erasmus+ with a Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP), but the detail of this has not yet been announced. These programmes are covered in more detail later in this briefing.

Erasmus+ student and staff mobility

[Erasmus UK figures show](#) that between 2013/14 and 2022/23, 17,065 staff and 112,355 students took part in the scheme. **Table 1** sets out the number of staff and students taking part by country of sending institution.

Table 1: Outgoing staff and student numbers by UK country of sending institution

Staff	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total cumulative
England	66	1,677	2,085	2,236	2,445	2,673	820	28	1,059	57	13,146
Northern Ireland	3	64	63	76	99	91	15	8	57	2	478
Overseas Territories	0	0	0	2	10	10	6	0	2	0	30
Scotland	11	262	357	465	516	644	218	7	169	18	2,667
Wales	0	88	130	142	148	148	43	0	40	5	744
Total	80	2,091	2,635	2,921	3,218	3,566	1,102	43	1,327	82	17,065

Students	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total cumulative
England	104	11,184	11,957	12,429	12,714	12,542	10,468	5,050	8,400	14	84,862
Northern Ireland	1	610	616	685	702	588	600	202	356	0	4,360
Overseas Territories	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3
Scotland	6	2,197	2,431	2,548	2,705	2,701	2,487	840	2,207	2	18,124
Wales	10	741	738	794	754	744	559	256	408	2	5,006
Total	121	14,732	15,742	16,456	16,875	16,575	14,114	6,349	11,373	18	112,355

Source: Erasmus+ UK [2014-2023 Higher education mobility statistics](#)

Between 2013/14 and 2022/23 of all UK **staff** taking part in Erasmus+:

- 16% were from Scottish institutions.
- 77% were from English institutions.
- 3% were from Northern Irish institutions.
- 4% were from Welsh institutions.

Between 2013/14 and 2022/23 of all UK **students** taking part in Erasmus+:

- 16% were from Scottish institutions.
- 76% from English institutions.
- 4% from Northern Irish institutions.
- and 4% from Welsh institutions.

Erasmus+ value to Scotland

A [2020 briefing from Universities Scotland](#) stated that between 2014 and 2018, Erasmus+ funded 164 projects and 17 strategic partnerships in higher education in Scotland at the value of €50.2m and €5.4m respectively.

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) highlighted to the [House of Lords European Union Committee in 2019](#) that while Scottish participants comprised 12% of the total UK figure, Scotland received 13% of total Erasmus+ funding in the UK between 2014 and 2018. RSE's written submission to the Committee stated:

“Scottish organisations have been very successful in bidding for Erasmus+ funding. Since the programme started in 2014, Scotland has secured more than €90m worth of Erasmus+ funding. This represents 13% of the total Erasmus+ funding (€677m) awarded to the UK between 2014 and 2018 and is greater than Scotland's 8.2% share of the UK population.” – [RSE written submission to HoL EU Committee, 2019](#)

In its written submission to the [Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee Inquiry on Erasmus+ in 2018](#), the British Council stated that in 2017 Scotland “received its highest-ever allocation of Erasmus+ funding”, with €21m awarded compared to €16m the previous year. The €21m received in 2017 was split between sectors as follows:

- €11.4m was received by Scotland's universities;
- €2.3m was received by Scotland's schools;
- €4.75m was received by Scottish organisations working in vocational education and training;
- €1.6m was received by Scottish organisations working in adult education;
- €756k was received by Scottish youth work organisations.

Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee Erasmus+ Inquiry

In 2018, the Scottish Parliament's Session 5 Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee carried out an inquiry into Erasmus+. The purpose of this inquiry was to learn more about the programme and consider the implications of Scotland no longer participating in it. The inquiry was conducted prior to the UK Government's announcement that the UK would no longer participate in the programme.

In its [report following the inquiry](#), the Committee expressed concern about the lack of analysis around the value of Erasmus+ to sectors participating in the scheme such as youth work, voluntary, or school, further and higher education. The Committee

called for the Scottish Government to conduct analysis of the benefits of Erasmus+ to relevant sectors

During the inquiry, the Committee heard evidence that smaller institutions needed full access to Erasmus+ to build networks supporting mobility programmes.

On the prospect of Scotland participating in Erasmus+ without the rest of the UK, Jackie Killeen, Director of British Council Scotland, stated:

“If Scotland were able to participate in the programme in any way, either as part of the UK or in another form, we would work to ensure that we serviced that and met those needs.” – [Committee report, 14/03/18](#)

Student exchange programmes post-Brexit

Development of a Scottish Education Exchange Programme

The Scottish Government stated in the 2021-22 Programme for Government (PfG) the intention to replace Erasmus+ with a Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP). The [PfG stated](#):

“We will...develop a Scottish Education Exchange Programme to support the international mobility of staff and learners, and work to re-secure Scotland’s access to the Erasmus + Programme.” – [Programme for Government, 2021-22](#)

Responding to a question about the timetable of SEEP from Beatrice Wishart MSP during Education and Skills Question Time on 12 January 2023, then-Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills Shirley-Anne Somerville said “work is progressing”, adding:

“...we will deliver on it within this parliamentary session.” – [Official Report](#)

In a letter to this Committee on 19 May 2023, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education; and Minister for Veterans Graeme Dey said that the Scottish Government had engaged with stakeholders and is “listening to the sectors and the needs of their learners and staff”.

The letter states a Scottish scheme would seek to focus:

“...on addressing the gaps in the Turing scheme, including in areas such as the participation of youth programmes, adult learners, and community learning.” – Scottish Government correspondence with Education, Children and Young People Committee, 19/05/23

The letter also stated:

“On dealing with the fundamental flaw in the Turing scheme, which is the lack of a multinational framework and the resulting impact on opportunities for students from the EU to benefit from studying in Scotland, we continue to explore options to support the vital bilateral exchange arrangements between educational institutions.” – Scottish Government correspondence with Education, Children and Young People Committee, 19/05/23

Giving evidence to the [Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture \(CEEC\) Committee](#) in February 2022, the then-Universities Scotland Convener Professor Andrea Nolan said a Scottish scheme could take elements from Erasmus+ and the Turing Scheme:

“I would love us to combine short-term exchanges and a progressive approach as a feature that we carry through, and to have less of a focus on people having to do a year abroad. Those would be the main elements for me: the improvements that I saw in the Turing scheme and continuing support for inward students.” - [Official Report, 3/02/22](#)

The Turing Scheme

In December 2020, the UK Government announced the Turing scheme would open to UK students from September 2021, providing:

“...similar opportunities for students to study and work abroad as the Erasmus+ programme but it will include countries across the world and aims to deliver greater value for money to taxpayers.” – [UK Government media release, 26/12/2020](#)

Initial funding of £100m was provided for the first year of the scheme and this was expected to enable around 35,000 students to go on overseas placements and exchanges. The scheme is open to Scottish institutions. Organisations including schools, colleges and universities can apply for funding for projects on behalf of their students. [Youth work organisations were eligible to apply for Turing Scheme funding for 2023/24 in partnership with schools, further education or vocational education and training providers.](#)

A [November 2022 briefing from the House of Commons Library](#) sets out the detail of the Turing Scheme, as summarised below.

Eligible organisations bid for funding, giving an overview of their project’s proposed activities and budget. Successful bidders then make grants available to their learners so they can take part in international placements.

Projects must focus on four main objectives: global Britain; levelling up; developing key skills; and value for UK tax-payers.

Successful bids receive funding to cover organisational costs linked with administration. The rate for this is £315 per participant for the first 100 participants and £180 thereafter. Living cost support of between £335 and £545 per month depending on placement length, participant, and destination country.

The Turing Scheme is also intended to promote widening access, and encourages applicants to set out how their bids will seek to widen participation to disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. A full list of widening access measures can be found in the [Turing Scheme Programme Guide](#).

The Turing Scheme funds the expenses of UK students studying abroad but does not fund students from abroad to study in the UK as Erasmus+ did.

Table 2 shows projects funded by the Turing Scheme, broken down by nation and sector.

Table 2: Turing Scheme funding amounts and number of approved projects

	Higher Education		Further Education		Schools		Total	
	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects	Funding (£m)	Projects
2021/22								
England	56.04	111	21.65	101	5.77	105	83.46	317
Wales	3.01	7	1.55	2	0.56	4	5.12	13
Scotland	6.95	17	0.98	7	0.38	5	8.31	29
N.I	0.94	4	0.65	9	0.00	0	1.59	13
UK Total	66.94	139	24.83	119	6.71	114	98.48	372
2022/23								
England	53.06	103	32.01	93	6.93	69	92.00	265
Wales	2.16	8	0.17	1	0.12	1	2.45	10
Scotland	5.81	16	2.65	11	0.56	3	9.02	30
N.I	1.08	4	1.52	7	0.00	0	2.60	11
UK Total	62.11	131	36.35	112	7.61	73	106.07	316

Source: [House of Commons Library](#)

The data in **Table 3** shows that in 2021/22, 8.4% of approved projects were in Scotland. In 2022/23, 8.5% of approved projects were in Scotland.

Table 3: % share of funding by nation

	£m	% share
2021/22		
England	83.46	84.7
Wales	5.12	5.2
Scotland	8.31	8.4
N.I	1.59	1.6
UK Total	98.48	100
2022/23		
England	92.00	86.7
Wales	2.45	2.3
Scotland	9.02	8.5
N.I	2.60	2.5
UK Total	106.07	100

Response to the Turing Scheme

As covered earlier in this briefing, the Scottish higher education sector had [highlighted continued participation in Erasmus+ as a top priority](#).

The [HoC November 2022 briefing on Turing](#) notes Universities UK welcomed the Turing Scheme as a “fantastic development”, but warned the number of international students may fall as a result of the scheme’s lack of funding for students coming to the UK.

Giving evidence to the [Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture \(CEEC\) Committee on 3 Feb 2022](#), the then-Universities Scotland Convener Professor Andrea Nolan said that while universities were disappointed not to be part of Erasmus+, they were “trying to make a success” of the Turing Scheme.

Professor Nolan highlighted Turing’s focus on shorter-term exchanges as positive for those with caring responsibilities or from disadvantaged groups. The lack of inward mobility was highlighted as a “real challenge”. Professor Nolan said:

“For us, an ideal programme would have some of the features of Turing such as short-term mobility, but it would also enable students to come into our universities.” – [Official Report, 3/02/22](#)

Professor Nolan highlighted the work universities had to do in order to build relationships in the aftermath of the UK’s withdrawal from Erasmus+:

“In short, the ideal scheme would have those reciprocal relationships. We are all frantically trying to build them; indeed, my institution, Edinburgh Napier University, has reached out to 65 of our Erasmus partners to ask for bilateral joint exchanges, and we have had agreement from, I think, 40 per cent of them so far. You can just imagine it, though: we once had this wonderfully organised multifaceted scheme, and now we are all suddenly making bilateral arrangements. The ideal would be a broad-based scheme with no bilaterals and funding for inward students.” - [Official Report, 3/02/22](#)

Writing in EU politics magazine, The Parliament, on 19 January 2021, Law Professor Paul James Cardwell, Deputy Head at the University of Strathclyde Law School, said Erasmus had “become part of the fabric of education across the EU” and the claim that the UK could replace this in a matter of months “is not ambitious; it is rash”. He added:

“students and young people who are the main beneficiaries of the scheme are likely to be the ones to lose out.” – [Article, 19/01/21](#)

Professor Cardwell also questioned the ability of the Turing Scheme to help conclude exchange agreements in developing countries due to it being...“a scheme that only funds outgoing students, with a harsh and costly visa system for incoming students.”

In February 2021, YouthLink Scotland CEO Tim Frew wrote to then-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Oliver Dowden about the Turing Scheme.

While the letter is no longer available online, an accompanying [news release](#) said YouthLink Scotland sought clarity on why a youth strand had been excluded from the scheme, and how plans would ensure young people from disadvantaged backgrounds could access the programme.

Taith

In March 2021, the Welsh Government announced that their [replacement Erasmus+ scheme would start from 2022](#), with funding of £65m up to 2026. The scheme is called Taith, which is Welsh for 'journey'.

Taith is open to learners and staff in adult education; further and vocational education; higher education; schools; and youth work. Participating organisations in Wales can invite international partners and learners to study, train, volunteer or work in Wales.

The first programme (2022 to 2026) will aim to fund 15,000 people from Wales to go on exchanges. 10,000 people from all over the world will come to study, train, volunteer or work in Wales.

In February, [Taith celebrated one year since its launch](#). In its first year, Taith has provided over £10m for 51 international learning exchange projects. This has:

- Benefitted over 100 organisations from across Wales; and
- Resulted in over 6,000 exchanges with 95 different countries.

Taith also awarded £10m to Universities Wales to deliver the Global Wales project. This brings together Welsh further and higher education institutions and organisations to work collaboratively to boost Wales' international profile, build networks and partnerships and support international recruitment.

The [Taith Programme Strategy](#) sets out five main objectives:

1. To deliver an inclusive, all-Wales programme to get more people involved in international exchanges, to broaden the horizons and confidence of young people, learners and staff at all levels in Wales, give them life-enhancing opportunities and support them to become ambitious, capable learners throughout their lives.
2. To promote collaborations between Welsh and international organisations that enable two-way learning exchanges to benefit everyone involved, build international links, and support the education sectors, including youth work and adult education.
3. To encourage ambitious, innovative and creative activities that represent the best in international education exchanges and collaboration.

4. To raise the international profile of Wales as an open, outward-looking and globally responsible nation, committed to building on its legacy of international partnerships and relations.
5. To help deliver Welsh Government priorities in transforming international engagement and developing the best in international education and youth sectors through sustainable actions that benefit current and future generations in Wales.

The programme is also committed to improving access for people with disabilities, additional learning needs, underrepresented groups and from disadvantaged backgrounds. It seeks to promote Wales and the Welsh language to the world. It also seeks to encourage sustainable travel.

Taith funding calls

[Taith Pathway 1: Mobility and participants](#) awarded funding to projects delivering physical and virtual mobility for individuals and groups. It offered opportunities to learn, study, work or volunteer abroad and was open to schools, youth, adult education, further and vocational education and training sectors, and higher education.

[Taith Pathway 2: Partnership and Strategic](#) aimed to build partnership and collaboration through international projects and address educational challenges and opportunities in Wales and internationally.

Taith currently has its [‘Taith Champions’ funding call](#) open until 30 May 2023. This is open to schools, youth work and the adult education sector. The funding will be used to help build capacity for running exchange projects within organisations that have not previously engaged in international exchange programmes.

The aims of this funding call are ‘outreach’ and ‘support’:

- ‘Outreach’ aims to identify organisations working with disadvantaged, hard to reach, underrepresented groups and people with disabilities or additional support needs.
- ‘Support’ is for organisations with little or no experience of international exchange.

Successful bidders will receive £60,000 to fund activities for 12 months from 1 September 2023.

More information on funding call outcomes can be found on the [Taith website](#).

Lynne Currie, Senior Researcher (Further and Higher Education), SPICe Research

19 May 2023

Annexe B

Letter from Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans – dated 19 May 2023

Thank you for the invitation to provide the Education, Children and Young People Committee with an update on the Scottish Education Exchange Programme. Unfortunately, I am scheduled to be in the Isle of Wight representing the Scottish Government at an intergovernmental event on 24th May 2023. I have therefore provided an update on this and associated work, and I look forward to having an opportunity to discuss matters at a future committee meeting.

Scotland has a vibrant culture, cutting edge innovation and a world-renowned reputation for providing a warm, friendly, and open welcome to everyone. Our international students and the opportunities afforded by Erasmus+ have benefitted both Scotland and the European Union. It is therefore deeply regrettable that the UK Government decided not to participate in Erasmus+, which also prevents Scotland from participating in its own right.

Erasmus + had a major impact in Scotland, with proportionally more students from Scotland taking part in Erasmus than from any other country in the UK. In the academic year 2021/22 more than 82,000 students from over 180 different countries came to study at Scottish universities, which means that international students made up nearly a quarter of the total student population. Scotland also has the highest percentage (24%) of international and EU students of any of the four UK nations.

While these trends demonstrate that Scotland remains a strong international study destination, since the UK's EU exit and subsequent withdrawal from the Erasmus+ programme the number of EU Entrants to Scottish HE institutions has dropped. In 2021/2022 the number was 4,515, a drop of 45% from the previous year. Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG www.gov.scot.

The UK Government has now introduced the Turing Scheme as a replacement for the Erasmus+ programme. The Turing Scheme fails to match the breadth and scope of Erasmus+. It offers no provision for inward mobility to the UK, nor does it offer any provision for staff inward or outward mobility. The Turing Scheme focuses on supporting outward mobility from UK institutions to host institutions (EU and non-EU). As there are no formal arrangements with other countries, Turing relies upon individual institutions to establish their own arrangements for reciprocal exchanges from outside the UK to their institution.

The performance and impact of the UK Government Turing Scheme is difficult to determine, including the progress being made by individual institutions to establish their own arrangements for reciprocal student exchanges from overseas institutions. We continue to monitor the impact of the Turing scheme and engage with the Scottish Education sector and UK Government to ensure that Turing better reflect the needs of Scotland.

Following the UK Government decision to withdraw from Erasmus+, the Scottish Government stated in its 2021-22 Programme for Government its intention to introduce a Scottish Education Exchange Programme. We have engaged with stakeholders from across the education sector, including higher and further education, schools (including early years and care), vocational education and training, youth work, adult education, and sports. We are listening to the sectors and the needs of their learners and staff to ensure we create a programme fit for Scotland.

Drawing on our extensive engagement with stakeholders, our focus is increasingly on addressing the gaps in the Turing scheme, including in areas such as the participation of youth programmes, adult learners, and community learning. On dealing with the fundamental flaw in the Turing scheme, which is the lack of a multinational framework and the resulting impact on opportunities for students from the EU to benefit from studying in Scotland, we continue to explore options to support the vital bilateral exchange arrangements between educational institutions.

At the same time, we have been consulting on the development of the Purpose and Principles for post-school education, research, and skills, alongside our priorities for the wider education and skills system. These will be informed by a series of independent yet interrelated reviews that are due to publish shortly, including the National Discussion on education, review of the Skills Delivery Landscape being taken forward

by James Withers and the Review of Qualifications and Assessment being led by Professor Louise Hayward.

Together, this work will help frame all our education priorities, including our next steps for enhancing Scotland's international profile and opportunities for studying here and overseas. This will include consideration of the future action we will take to fulfil our Programme for Government commitment to establish a Scottish International Exchange Programme, alongside our wider international Education priorities.

We will also continue to build on existing action such as the destination Scotland partnership that brings together the collective communications effort of the Scottish Government and key partners, including VisitScotland, Scottish Development International, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Creative Scotland, and Scotland Food & Drink, to harness our energy, expertise, and resources, increasing the impact of Scotland's global reputation. Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG www.gov.scot.

I look forward to discussing these matters further with the committee at a future meeting.

Graeme Dey MSP

Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans

Annexe C