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Our ref: Publication of the Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills Development

27 June 2023

Dear Convener,

I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you and other colleagues on Tuesday on the final [Purpose and Principles](#) and Initial Priorities documents being published today.

I previously wrote to the committee on the publication of the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape on 7 June. You will also be aware of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills' statement to parliament on 22 June on holistic reform of Scotland's lifelong education system, including the publication of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment. The publication of the final Purpose and Principles for post-school education, skills and research today is a key part of this approach to holistic reform of the system.

Alongside the Purpose and Principles and Initial Priorities we have also published a number of supporting documents. These illustrate the extent of engagement that has taken place with stakeholders and users of the system in developing the Purpose and Principles as well as setting out a common starting point for a shared understanding of what the system is and what it does and the outcomes that we want to see it deliver in the future.

The supporting documents published today include:

- **Diversity of Provision Report** – This report describes the current system at a strategic level to introduce the reader to the evidence base behind system components, pathways and connects.
- **Analysis of Engagement Report** – This report outlines the methodological approach that was taken to engagement for the Purpose and Principles and analysis on what we heard from stakeholders and users of the system throughout our extensive engagement.

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- **Lexicon (shared terminology)** – The Lexicon begins to address the second recommendation in the Skills Delivery Landscape Review of having a common language for the system. It has been created in collaboration with SCQPF and has been a crucial achievement in allowing us to pursue the needed reform by gaining agreement by actors in the system on terminology.
- **System Outcomes** (from extensive logic models which will be published in the autumn) – The outcomes portion of the logic models paint a clear picture of what the system should look like in the short, medium and long-term.

These have been developed over several phases starting in Spring 2022. The approach taken was outlined in the Scope and Approach published in June 2022. The first phase of development involved collating and reviewing the existing evidence, reports and commentary, alongside targeted engagement with key partners including SDS.

From this initial base, further engagement was undertaken with Industry Leadership Groups and Business Organisations, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Developing Young Workforce (DYW) Employer Networks, and with NDPBs and partners across the system. A first draft of the Purpose and Principles was developed and shared, along with initial suggestions as to what implementing these might mean in practice.

In December 2022, an interim Purpose and set of Principles was published, setting out the principles to guide our decision making as we reimagine the system. The final phase of stakeholder engagement to March 2023 centred on the voices of those who use and deliver the system. Regular meetings were held with both SDS and SFC, with linkages between the Purpose and Principles and the Withers Review, SFC Review and the Shared Outcomes Framework recognised and discussed. Officials worked with stakeholders to identify opportunities to engage with learners and those with lived experience of the system, including those involved in community learning and development opportunities and Modern Apprentices.

As the post-school education, research and skills system is inherently interconnected, it was decided that to understand the system fully it would be appropriate to adopt the approach of the Purpose and Principles fulfilling the Scottish Government's commitment to publish a statement for strategic intent for tertiary education.

Due to the interconnected nature of the system, the Purpose and Principles team engaged with similar people on related themes as was done when conducting the Skills Delivery Landscape Review. Whilst we did not have the same remit we heard similar things. In setting the future direction for the system it is only appropriate to take into consideration all of the other engagement that has been undertaken.

The Purpose and Principles is the lasting framework that sets policy direction, supports decision making and shapes delivery priorities. Through the application of the Purpose and Principles we will deliver improvements to the social and economic outcomes for learners and employers from the investment that we make in post-school education, research and skills. Alongside the Purpose and Principles, we have also published our Initial Priorities, setting out some of the key areas of work that the government will progress.

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The action sets out in the Initial Priorities paper and the Purpose and Principles themselves substantively respond to a number of the recommendations made in the Skills Delivery Landscape Review and set the foundation for long-term system-wide reform. The Initial Priorities seek to deliver better social and economic outcomes from the investment that we make in lifelong education, skills and research and critically – ensuring that this improvement is visible to learners and employers.

A number of the actions set out in the Initial Priorities document substantively accept and set our initial actions across many of the recommendations set out in the Skills Delivery Landscape Review, in particular that the Scottish Government will lead on:

- Developing a new model of public funding for all forms of provision, including apprenticeships;
- Investigating the options to deliver a single funding body that includes tuition and living cost support and includes consideration of the status and scope of the body's responsibilities;
- Ensuring that responsibility for overseeing all publicly funded post-school qualifications (except degrees) and the underpinning frameworks and standard form part of the responsibilities of the new qualifications agency;
- Within financial constraints, build on manifesto commitments and undertake a review of student support for part-time learners as well as developing a model that better takes account of all provision pathways;
- Building on the recommendations of the Careers Review, including options for future delivery of national careers services;
- Work to inform our future approach to apprenticeship development and delivery as part of an integrated landscape of pathways;
- Taking responsibility for skills planning – including developing an approach at a national level that works with partners and sets clear priorities for the system. That works to enhance and embed the role of employers in shaping system planning priorities, pathways and provision and is supported by a regional approach that builds on existing regional economic partnerships and has employers and local providers, in particular colleges, at the centre.

There are a number of additional actions highlighted in the Purpose and Principles Initial Priorities publication that were outwith the scope of the Skills Delivery Landscape Review, these include:

- Taking forward a pilot international mobility programme, co-designed with the sector, continuing to press for future association to Horizon Europe and building on our Study in Scotland materials as part of our approach to international talent attraction and retention;
- Working with institutions, public bodies and unions to ensure that staff at all levels are supported and empowered to deliver high quality work, in keeping with fair work principles.

While today's publication represents a significant milestone, it is one of the first steps on the journey towards reform.

There has been cross-party and cross-sectoral consensus on the need for reform and I am committed to continuing to engage across the Parliament and with stakeholders, including the unions representing those most likely to be affected by these changes, and to work together to design a system that is fit for the future.

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With this in mind, I would be happy to come to committee early next session to give evidence on the Purpose and Principles and the wider work being done in the post-school education, research and skills space.

GRAEME DEY

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