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Convener
Education Children and Young People Committee

By email

22 June 2023

Dear Convener,

HAYWARD REVIEW AND EDUCATION AND SKILLS REFORM UPDATE

The Scottish Government announced the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in October 2021. Ministers appointed Professor Louise Hayward to lead the Review, with her work beginning in Spring 2022. The final report has now been submitted to Ministers and been published. In a statement to Parliament today I will set out its key findings as part of an update on Education and Skills Reform. A copy of the full report as well as a summary are attached.

The Review was initiated at a pivotal moment for Scotland's education system, driven by renewed national debate on the purpose of qualification and assessment following the impact of COVID-19 on exams. This debate was contextualised by key reports, such as the [OECD 2021 Report on Curriculum for Excellence](#); the [Stobart OECD Report on Qualifications and Assessment](#); and the [Muir Report on reforming our national education infrastructure](#).

The detailed and comprehensive report is the product of very thorough work undertaken over the last year by Professor Hayward, her Independent Review Group and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. It makes 26 recommendations centred around the introduction of a Scottish Diploma of Achievement (SDA). Professor Hayward envisages the SDA acting as a graduation certificate that would be offered in all Senior Phase education settings, with young people given the opportunity to experience learning in all three elements on the SDA: Programmes of Learning; Project Learning; and a Personal Pathway. The Review sets out each of these three components of the proposed SDA in detail, as well as making several other key recommendations. I have thanked Professor Hayward for the work she has done, and I am particularly grateful for the inclusive and transparent approach that was taken.

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These recommendations, if implemented, could represent significant change to the qualifications offered by schools and colleges. I must be certain that any changes are the right ones for Scotland's young people. Before any conclusion is reached, I need to hear from those directly impacted, including teachers who will be key to driving any reforms to our qualifications system.

I am also mindful of ensuring that the Government response to the Hayward Review is aligned with any wider reform activity being taken forward as a result of the National Discussion, the [Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape](#), and the forthcoming Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills. This wider education and skills reform agenda will also importantly impact on the establishment of the new national education bodies. The Scottish Government must now provide strong leadership on reform, starting with the creation of an overarching narrative, and ensuring any inherent opportunities are not missed.

It is through demonstrating this leadership that I have concluded now is not the right time to introduce legislation on education reform. We must ensure our national education and skills landscape is designed to better support our learners and the education system. This means ensuring our national education bodies have clarity of purpose and responsibility, and that they can be shaped by the recent publications. I recognise this will have an impact on those at the SQA and Education Scotland, and the timescales for reform, but we must take time to get reform right and deliver a cohesive package of reform that delivers better outcomes for Scotland's young people and the system.

The need for reform is clear. I will use the coming months to reflect on and discuss these recommendations with our stakeholders, especially with our teachers and learners. We will take the time needed so that stakeholder voices can be heard before any decisions are made. The Scottish Government intend to set out a detailed response to these reviews, in the full context of lifelong education and skills reform, in due course.

We have an opportunity to consider bold and radical reforms to our education and skills system. The challenge now is to seize this opportunity and deliver real change. I very much hope we can work collectively, across boundaries and parties, to achieve this.

JENNY GILRUTH

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