



Scottish Qualifications Authority
Ùghdarras Theisteanas Na H-Alba

14 August 2025

Education, Children & Young People Committee Members

By email to: ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Committee members,

It is now just over a month since Parliament passed the Education (Scotland) Bill; a significant milestone for education reform and, in particular, for the closure of SQA and the opening of Qualifications Scotland.

The final shape of the Bill represented your determination to ensure Qualifications Scotland is a significantly different organisation in comparison to its predecessor. I share your determination, and I have been clear throughout my tenure as Chair of SQA that the new organisation must be different and must feel different for learners, educators and the many others that we are here to serve. I know that Nick Page, our new Chief Executive, is equally determined to deliver that change.

There is much for us to do before, and after, Qualifications Scotland is established to ensure we deliver on both the detail and the spirit of the Bill, and I want to assure you that work is happening at pace to achieve that objective. To that end, I thought it would be helpful for me to update you on some key areas of progress.

Accreditation

There was considerable focus on accreditation during the passage of the Bill, and two important appointments have recently been made to strengthen the independence of the accreditation function within Qualifications Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary has appointed Professor Ken Thomson as Convenor of the Accreditation Committee. As you will recall, the Bill established that the Convenor would be directly appointed by Ministers and that the Committee would act independently of Qualifications Scotland. Prof Thomson is a retired college principal who will bring a significant depth of knowledge and experience to the role.

This is an important appointment but is not the only step being taken. Further work is underway to ensure that: the accreditation function, while remaining within Qualifications Scotland, is a demonstrably independent part of the organisation; and the quality assurance of National Qualifications is strengthened significantly.

Qualifications Scotland Board and wider governance

The Bill includes a number of provisions to strengthen the governance of Qualifications Scotland, in particular to ensure the interests of learners, teachers and lecturers are properly represented.

Recruitment to the new Board is well underway and, in due course, the Cabinet Secretary will be able to announce the appointments she makes. The recruitment drive includes the appointment of practicing teachers and lecturers, as well as individuals with knowledge of the interests of learners, employers and staff. I look forward to the new, strong and well-balanced Board starting its work in due course and ensuring Qualifications Scotland delivers, and delivers well, for those it serves.

We are also working with the Scottish Government to establish the new Strategic Advisory Council and Interest Committees and, again, to ensure these properly represent the breadth of interests among Qualifications Scotland's stakeholders and give them a strong and meaningful voice. In line with the Bill, the Learner Interest Committee and the Teacher and Practitioner Committee will be underpinned by published Charters, co-created with learners and educators, which clearly set out what these groups can expect from Qualifications Scotland.

Schools Unit and qualifications reform

I was clear, throughout the passage of the Bill, that while legislation to replace SQA with Qualifications Scotland could and would deliver a great deal of change, I intended to also deliver further change beyond the reaches of statute. This includes changing organisational culture, transforming our digital offer, and strengthening engagement and collaboration.

An important part of that change is the new Schools Unit that has been created. This is being run by Sarah Brown, an experienced secondary headteacher on secondment to us, who joined us in July. Over the coming weeks, months and years, the Schools Unit will:

- Help drive culture change, ensuring that among Qualifications Scotland staff there is a stronger understanding of and empathy for learning and teaching in our classrooms.
- Create a one-stop digital presence for teachers so that they can easily access Qualifications Scotland materials online and interact with us easily.
- Support the reform of our qualifications and, in particular, ensure the voices of teachers and learners are listened to and acted upon.
- To this end, Sarah is working with us to bring forward a delivery plan.

I hope the progress I have outlined above reassures you that we are working hard to deliver the will of Parliament, as set out in the Education (Scotland) Bill, and also to go beyond that to ensure Qualifications Scotland delivers the change and transformation that the education system requires and expects. Qualifications Scotland will be much more than a rebrand. It will be a hard reset.

As ever, I would be happy to discuss any or all of this, or indeed anything else about Qualifications Scotland, with you at a future Committee session, as would the Chief Executive, Nick Page, the Chief Examiner, Donna Stewart, and Chief Accreditation Officer, when appointed.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley Rogers CBE
SQA Chair