Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
John Swinney MSP

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: dfmcse@gov.scot

Clare Adamson MSP*
Convener Education and Skills Committee
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

*By email to: es.committee@parliament.scot

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Dear Convener

SCOTTISH NATIONAL STANDARDISED ASSESSMENTS

<u>Budget Scrutiny</u>

I write in response to your letter of 25 January in connection with your budget scrutiny. The SNSA provides teachers with standard, consistent and comparable information related to everyday learning. This information contributes to the Achievement of CfE Levels (ACEL) data which is based on teacher professional judgement of children and young people's progress. In order to help ensure the reliability and consistency of the ACEL data, Education Scotland has been running a national programme of moderation and support for teachers since 2016, to supplement existing local activity. This Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officer (QAMSO programme) has shared and supported the understanding of standards through moderation of pupil evidence in numeracy, writing and reading. From this year, training in standards within listening and talking has also been available for the first time. This programme has been paid for by more than £800,000 of specific Scottish Government funding over the last three years.

The SNSA and the data it provides to teachers are also designed to support nationally consistent ACEL data. ACER UK was awarded the contract for the SNSA in October 2016 for an initial period of three years ending in October 2019. The estimated contract completion cost is in the region of £9m. This figure includes the initial start-up costs of £1.1m (suppliers development and initial implementation fee) and the annual running costs (assessment fees and management fees) which cost around £3.4m per academic year. The assessment fees are estimated, assuming a 100% uptake of assessments for P1, P4, P7 and S3 in the academic year (the year 1 uptake was around 94%). The £3.4m per annum figure includes the cost of payments made by ACER to its sub-contractors, SCHOLAR and Twig Ltd.

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The Scottish Government is unable to provide a detailed breakdown of the annual running costs for reasons of commercial confidentiality. These running costs do however, cover many of the specific issues highlighted in the Committee's letter, including SCHOLAR's ongoing delivery of training for staff using the assessments and Twig Ltd's provision of support functions to schools and local authorities. Additional training courses have been developed specifically to address how teachers can use SNSA data to inform improvements to learning and teaching and the development and delivery of that training work has been subsumed within overall contract costs.

The annual running costs also include annual analysis and review of the results, publication of the annual SNSA National Report and ongoing system enhancements (content/design) based on emerging evidence and feedback gathered from local authorities and schools. Enhancements implemented in response to the 2017/18 User Review, include re-design and replenishment of questions, an updated individual report with a long scale and national norms, additional training courses, five cases studies and updated parental advice.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement on SNSA and assessment more broadly does not sit with ACER but with relevant Scottish Government and Education Scotland officials. This includes communications with parents and carers and discussion with those who have first-hand experience of the assessments, for example through the P1 Practitioner Forum which provides an opportunity for teachers, schools and local authorities to share their experiences of the SNSA. This engagement is supported by existing Scottish Government and Education Scotland staff as part of their normal duties. As such it is not possible to provide specific or additional costs. Any catering or travel and subsistence costs for those attending meetings are met from within existing budgets.

The Scottish Government does not make any specific funding allocations to local authorities or Education Scotland in respect of SNSA. As set out above, the Scottish Government does support Education Scotland's QAMSO programme. Education Scotland support for SNSA activity, for example on the quality assurance of questions for the assessments, is provided as part of officials' normal duties.

It is not yet possible to calculate a precise figure for the cost of the independent review of P1 assessments. Our current estimate is that the review could cost up to £50,000 depending on the amount of time the review team needs to complete its report which is due with Ministers by the end of May 2019.

As referenced by ACER at the Committee's evidence session on 9 January, the SNSA system now includes feedback questionnaires which allow teachers to provide their thoughts and experience of carrying out the assessments. Similarly, children and young people are invited to provide feedback on their experiences at the end of their assessment. The introduction of these questionnaires was in direct response to recommendations from the 2017/18 User Review published in August 2018, and implementation costs fell within the terms of the existing contract.

Questionnaires will provide valuable information on the experiences of children and how teachers are using the assessments as part of ongoing learning and teaching. The feedback we receive will form an integral part of the 2018/19 User Review as will the outputs from the P1 Practitioner Forum. As with this year, we will work with ACER to identify and implement further improvements to the system, in response to such feedback.

<u>Data literacy</u>

ITE programmes provide a comprehensive and developmental approach to ensuring student teachers are aware of both formative and summative assessment techniques. Universities work with students so they are able to build an assessment picture and document this. During placements, students are expected to carry out lesson plans that ensure pupil learning and progress is assessed and tracked.

In March 2017 we published an "Initial Teacher Education Content Analysis" report. This highlighted that a holistic approach is taken by all ITE providers to support student teachers to develop skills and knowledge in teaching keys areas that are the responsibility of all; and that literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing, equality and data literacy are embedded across all learning in ITE programmes. ITE providers have an obligation to ensure that their graduating students can use data to inform the next steps for their learners and also their own practice. Their programmes recognise that data literacy is an essential tool for teachers to be able to use the rich qualitative and quantitative data which is found in their classroom and schools to support improvement in their own practice and to explore the best ways to meet the needs of their pupils. The GTCS "Guidelines for ITE programmes in Scotland" makes specific reference to the need to develop the skill of data literacy. The GTCS expect this to be reflected in the content of programmes.

The introduction of a new self-evaluation framework, developed in partnership between Education Scotland, the Scottish Council of Deans of Education (SCDE) and GTCS, and published in 2018, will be used to support universities in demonstrating the quality of learning and teaching in the priority areas of literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and additional support needs; and identify where more support is required. This work will be complemented by the findings from a longitudinal study already underway, which is intended to provide a detailed insight and understanding of how effectively ITE is preparing newly qualified teachers for the classroom. The Measuring Quality in Initial Teacher Education (MQuITE) project is a collaboration between all teacher education universities and the GTCS, and will track a cohort of newly qualified teachers through their first five years in the profession. We expect the findings to contribute significantly to the ongoing development, delivery and improvement of quality teacher education in Scotland and help to ensure that it remains able to adapt to the changing needs of our children and young people.

Finally, the GTCS are in the process of refreshing the Professional Standards and have made specific reference to data literacy being a requirement in the Standard for Full Registration. A revised version will be published in 2020.

The Scottish Council of Deans of Education, who deliver initial teacher education, are willing to speak with the Committee in more detail about any aspect of their provision.

JOHN SWINNEY

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