

## Preface

*The Higher Tradition* was written to commemorate the centenary of the introduction of the Highers in 1888. By the time it was completed, it was possible to extend the study of national school examinations in Scotland to 1990. As the Scottish Examination Board approached the time when the new Scottish Qualifications Authority would take over all the responsibilities of the SEB and SCOTVEC, the Board asked me if I would carry the history up to the date of transfer. It has been a much bigger task than I expected because so much material had to be collated. I have been staggered by the huge number of initiatives during these last few years which have impacted on Scottish school examinations and by how much has been achieved in that time.

During the past decade, there have been three institutions in particular which have had a strong influence on developments in national school examinations — the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (previously called the SED and then the SOED), the Scottish Examination Board (SEB) and the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC). In writing the history of examinations up to the late-1980s, there was little more to consider than the work of the Department and the Board; but, in recent years, schools have found SCOTVEC's National Certificate a useful resource. The work of SCOTVEC therefore features much more in this volume than it did in *The Higher Tradition*, but still not as much as the work of the SEB.

As was the case in the writing of the original volume, I have been indebted to a whole range of people for the help they have given me in carrying out the research. As a retired teacher I naturally note interesting developments as they are reported in the media, but one doesn't internalise them in the same way as one does as an active participant. Being able to borrow past volumes of the Times Educational Supplement Scotland, therefore, was exceptionally useful in reminding me of important issues that should be pursued, often examining them from a human perspective which is seldom found in official documents. The Scottish Office has once more willingly opened up its files to me, and both the Board and the Council have handed over all relevant reports and minutes, besides checking certain facts and statistics. I wish to express my thanks to the individual members of staff in all these organisations for the personal help they gave me. My particular thanks go to the former Chief Executives of the Board and SCOTVEC, Hamish Long and Tom McCool, and to the Chief Executive of SQA, Ron Tuck, for checking the factual accuracy of what I have written. The opinions expressed at the end of Chapter 12 are entirely my own and not to be blamed upon anyone else.

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Henry L. Philip

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Unfortunately, various sets of circumstances at the turn of the century prevented the publication of Volume 2, and developments since then have resulted in other considerations taking priority. Once more, however, major changes are proposed that will impact not only on the Scottish examination system but on Scottish education as a whole. I therefore decided that Volume 2 should be taken off the shelf and made available for use in the coming debate. I have not been able to find a publisher since it is reckoned that the volume would not be financially viable; I have therefore decided to put it on the internet so that anyone who wishes may make use of the contents free of charge. All I would ask is that whoever does use it should acknowledge the source.

I have not altered the original text except to tidy up some less felicitous English expressions but, in the hope that it may make a small contribution to the current debate, I have added a Postscript containing some personal views on how things have developed since I completed the work.

October 2008

Henry L. Philip



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