



Department
for Education

Professor Graham Hutchings FRS
Chair
SCORE
6-9 Carlton House Terrace
London
SW1Y 5AG



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

Minister for Skills

1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET
T +44 (0) 20 7215.5000
E enquiries@bis.gov.uk
www.bis.gov.uk
www.education.gov.uk

Our ref: 2012/0081869POMH

7 January 2013

Dear Prof Hutchings

Thank you for your letter of 10 December 2012, addressed to the Minister of State for Schools, about the impact of funding changes at 16-19 on the uptake of science A levels. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government is committed to making it possible for students from all backgrounds to aspire to study at our best universities. I am confident that our funding reforms will not make it more difficult for them to do so.

The move to programme funding is intended to allow schools and colleges the flexibility to offer students the programmes that best suit them, both at A level and across all other post-16 study. The per-programme funding is set at a level that will support students to follow a two-year programme of up to four AS level courses and three A2 level courses, with around an additional 150 hours for enrichment activities, such as an extended project or an additional AS or A2 level course.

We recognise that, for some students, a larger programme of perhaps five A levels or equivalent will be appropriate, depending on students' aspirations and ability. We have therefore established a Ministerial Working Group, which I chair, to inform a decision about what the future 16-19 academic curriculum should look like and how it should be funded. This group has already met twice, in September and December of last year, and I can reassure you that the issue of the future of large programmes of study has been placed firmly on

its work programme. This will not be the only means by which we are engaging the sector on these changes. Discussions will take place in other forums, including stakeholder meetings organised by the Education Funding Agency. Designing a way forward poses a considerable challenge for us, but I wish to assure you that we will fully assess the impact of any proposals on all types of colleges and schools before we reach a decision.

In the meantime, while this important work is carried out, we have put formula protection funding in place, to ensure that no institution or training provider loses funding from the changes to the funding formula for at least three years from implementation.

We also took account of all the responses to the funding formula consultation, including that from SCORE, in our work to create a new funding formula. Much analysis was undertaken to look at the impact of the various proposals for the new formula to measure the impact on different types of institutions and on particular qualifications and courses.

Programme weightings were not removed from the funding formula, as was suggested in your letter, but they were revised. This is because they had become over-complicated, particularly as we move from funding per qualification to funding per programme. In reducing to four weightings from seven, we moved all academic and some vocational qualifications to the same weighting of 1.12, then rebased the weightings so that this became the new base rate weighting of 1. This means that, rather than cutting funding for science A Levels, we have increased funding for the other A levels that were funded at a lower rate previously, such as mathematics. In particular, we have ensured that all A level programmes will be funded at the same rate as each other from 2013/14. All schools provide a mix of A level subjects, and the overall impact on schools' funding of this change is very small. We expect schools to make sensible decisions about the subjects they will offer within the total resources they have available.

Finally, thank you for offering a meeting to discuss these matters further. Given that we are working on the issues at present through the Ministerial Working Group, I think a meeting would be likely to be more profitable after the group has made some progress and proposed possible solutions.

I do hope that this response is helpful.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Hancock', written in a cursive style.

MATTHEW HANCOCK MP