

Joint Council for Qualifications
Argyle House
2nd Floor
29-31 Euston Road
London
NW1 2SD

16 May 2013

Dear colleagues

Review of A-level subject content

Thank you for your letter of 29 April 2013, addressed to Professor Hutchings, regarding the review of A-level subject content. I succeeded Professor Hutchings as Chair of SCORE on 1 April 2013, so I would be grateful if you could amend your records accordingly.

SCORE supports the principle of reviewing A-level content to ensure it is fit for purpose and encourages progression to higher education. We have, both collectively and as individual organisations, carried out research that could support such a review, including the *Mind the Gap* report from the Institute of Physics, and the report on the assessment of mathematics in A-level sciences from SCORE. I understand that you met recently with representatives of the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology, who offered some feedback along the lines of that requested in your letter. At this stage, with the tight timescale imposed, which prohibits us consulting with our respective members, SCORE has nothing else to add. We also have grave concerns about the process outlined in your letter, chiefly because it places responsibility for the review of content with awarding organisations themselves, rather than with an independent body.

However, we do consider A-level reform to be an issue of supreme importance, and would not wish our decision to decline to take part in this process to be regarded as an indication that SCORE is disengaging from A-level reform. We believe that the main weakness with the A-levels is the quality of the assessment, so we would like to ensure that any process put in place for review includes a means of considering assessment as well as subject content. As we have made clear on a number of occasions, we feel that the best way to ensure appropriate involvement of all stakeholders would have been the formation of national subject committees, independent of any commercial interest

and with an explicit remit to monitor assessment. As this proposal has not been accepted by the Department for Education, the professional bodies within SCORE (the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology) are considering setting up their own curriculum and assessment committees in the subjects they represent. We will of course be happy to meet with both awarding organisations and Ofqual to discuss how these committees could support the development of qualifications in the future.

Yours sincerely



Professor Julia Buckingham
SCORE Chair



Dr Robert Parker
Chief Executive, Royal Society of
Chemistry



Dr Mark Downs FSB
Chief Executive, Society of Biology



Professor Paul Hardaker
Chief Executive, Institute of Physics