

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

4 June 2013

Dear Secretary of State

Key Stage 4 Accountability

I am writing as Chair of SCORE¹ to express grave concerns about the changes to the accountability measures currently being proposed, and the impact that those changes will have on the way the sciences are taught. We have responded to the consultation separately, but this is an issue of such importance that I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the SCORE position and join others in voicing our perspective from within the science community.

As the Government has recognised, performance measures drive behaviours in schools, and we support attempts to devise accountability measures that do so in a positive way. However, given that Academies and Free Schools are not required to teach the National Curriculum, we believe there is a very real danger that the proposed measures will result in some schools teaching the sciences in an unbalanced way and offering them as options at the age of 14. This will result in fewer students studying each of the sciences at GCSE and have a consequential negative impact on the take-up of the sciences at A-level and beyond.

In order to ensure that the accountability system does not, in the Department's own words, 'distort teaching and narrow the curriculum', we believe the proposals should be redrafted as follows:

- The **threshold** measure should include (at least) two science GCSEs as well as English and Mathematics GCSEs.
- The **average point score** measure should specify (at least) two science qualifications alongside English and mathematics, so the measure would become:
English, mathematics, (at least) two sciences; any combination of two other current EBacc subjects; and two other high value qualifications.

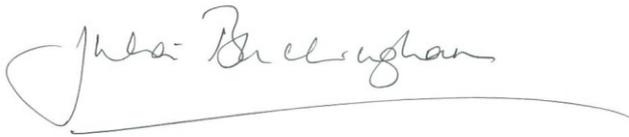
The content of the two (or more) science qualifications referred to above should be taught in a way that gives a balance across the major disciplines of physics, chemistry and biology,

¹ SCORE is a group of science organisations working together on science education policy. Members are the Association for Science Education, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology.

through following the statutory Programme of Study, whether this should lead to a combined science GCSE (or GCSEs) or separate GCSEs in these same three subjects.

The Government has on a number of occasions recognised the importance of science both to the economy and society more widely, and we believe shares SCORE's aim, which is to ensure that all students have access to the best possible education in the sciences. We hope the proposals we outline above would help to avoid any unintended impact on students' ability to study the sciences, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Buckingham". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

Professor Julia Buckingham
SCORE Chair