

SCORE statement
Monday 9 September 2013

Lost opportunity in A-level review

SCORE has serious concerns about the decision by Ofqual to push ahead with introducing new science A levels for first teaching in September 2015.

The decision is based on evidence presented in Professor Mark Smith's report on A-level reform, published on Friday 6 September.

The statement from SCORE - a partnership of the Association for Science Education, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Society of Biology – highlights that the learned societies have not been involved in any meaningful way in discussions around the content of A-level, despite claims to the contrary in Professor Smith's report.

SCORE's statement: "We support Mr. Gove's notion that the main users of A-levels - higher education and employers – should have a stronger say in devising A-level content. We do not believe, however, that the process used for reform has been effective in achieving this.

"The learned societies within SCORE represent the three core sciences in schools – biology, chemistry and physics – and are ideally placed to play a leading role in any qualifications reform, being independent and able to bring together all of the stakeholders concerned.

"However, despite claims to the contrary throughout the report published on Friday, SCORE has not been involved in any meaningful way in discussions around the content of the science A-levels.

"As it stands, the process will not improve the process of assessment or build coherence between the sciences and mathematics.

"From the outset, SCORE has highlighted its main concern is with assessment of A-level qualifications in the sciences because we believe that without significant change to the current assessment, we will fail to tackle the underlying issues of students lacking the appropriate skills. SCORE is not confident that the problems inherent in assessment can be resolved on the timescale laid out.

"The subject associations within SCORE wrote to Professor Smith outlining serious concerns with the review he was undertaking, offering to work with Ofqual and the Russell Group to address shortfalls with the qualifications in their subjects, but this offer was not acted upon.

"We remain committed to ensuring that A-levels are high quality qualifications that equip students with the appropriate knowledge and skills needed for progression to a range of destinations, and believe that our organisations offer the best route for ensuring that

multiple interests are properly represented. We continue to welcome the opportunity to discuss with Ofqual and the awarding organisations how this can best be achieved.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

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SCORE

2. SCORE is a partnership of organisations, which aims to improve science education in UK schools and colleges by supporting the development and implementation of effective education policy. The partnership is chaired by Professor Julia Buckingham and comprises the Association for Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society, Royal Society of Chemistry and Society of Biology. Visit SCORE at <http://www.score-education.org/home>