

The following reply was received via the SCORE education inbox, as opposed to in hard copy by post.

13 January 2014

Dear Julia

Thank you for sharing these principles with us and for your pro-active approach to suggesting improvements for the assessment of practical skills in A level sciences. I recognise that your principles relate to a long-term framework and that they need further consideration in the context of immediate changes to high-stakes qualifications that are delivered across the country in a wide range of settings and circumstances.

Our consultation responses indicate that there is strong support for our view that the current arrangements in science are unsatisfactory. However, there are also concerns over our proposed arrangement for separately reporting performance in the practical skills. We, like you, recognise the importance of practical skills in science and we want qualifications and assessments that support their development. We do not have this at the moment.

We have published our correspondence with the Council for Science and Technology (CST) regarding our consultation on this issue (<http://ofqual.gov.uk/news/correspondence-council-science-technology-cst/>). I would take this opportunity to assure you, as I did Sir Mark Walport, that we are considering carefully the concerns that you and others have raised and how we can take a principled and consistent approach to non-exam assessment across science and other subjects.

Our Board meets at the end of March and we will present to them the evaluation of responses to our consultation, including your feedback, together with a summary of any regulatory and equality impact assessments. As you would expect, the assessment of practical skills in sciences is a significant issue that we need to ensure we have fully explored if we are to present a properly considered set of recommendations to our Board.

When we last met we agreed that a further meeting may be helpful to ensure that we have the opportunity to draw on our respective areas of expertise when considering this and other issues relating to the development of high quality qualifications in sciences. I had understood that you would contact us about availability. If this is something that you believe would be helpful then please could you ask your office to contact my PA so that we can set up a mutually convenient time.

Yours sincerely

Glenys Stacey

Glenys Stacey
Chief Regulator, Ofqual