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### **GCSE Use of Mathematics**

I am writing to you regards recent developments with the GCSE Use of Mathematics qualification which throw in to doubt elements of the mathematical pathways model. I understand that regulatory decisions have necessitated the abandonment of the qualification and its possible replacement by a Higher Certificate in Use of Mathematics.

As Chair of ACME, I would like to express strong dissatisfaction with this decision. GCSE Use of Mathematics was a qualification designed to be taken by post-16 learners, and would have formed a key component in a mathematical pathways model for encouraging learners to keep studying mathematics, especially those for whom GCSE Mathematics may have been a major challenge. It would have benefited enormously from the currency of being called a GCSE.

By naming this instead as a Higher Certificate, the regulatory bodies have essentially denied the qualification any chance of being a success, leaving a gap in the suite of qualifications needed to support an effective model of mathematical pathways. The title 'Higher Certificate' has currency with neither employers nor higher education institutes, thus reducing the chances of uptake by learners.

I understand that one of the criticisms levelled at the qualification was that it was formed out of other qualifications, namely Functional Skills and Free Standing Mathematics Qualifications and that this was deemed to be unacceptable. Not only does ACME question this position, but we are also alarmed at the implications for GCE Use of Mathematics if such a policy is applied elsewhere. We do not see any justification for this policy, which appears not to put the needs of the learner first, and is inconsistent with decisions made regarding the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

I would value your views on our concerns as a matter of urgency, as it would appear that yet again regulatory decisions are being allowed to determine changes to qualifications which do not benefit the learner.

Yours sincerely

**Professor Dame Julia Higgins FRS FREng**  
Chair, Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education (ACME)