

13 May 2010

Professor Dame Julia Higgins FRS
Chair
Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education
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Dear Dame Julia

GCSE Use of Mathematics

Thank you for your letter of 14 April 2010, addressed to Isabel Nisbet. Isabel has asked me to respond on her behalf.

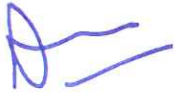
I am sorry that you are dissatisfied with our previous response, dated 15 March 2010, to your concerns over the decisions made regarding the proposal for a GCSE qualification in Use of Mathematics. We appreciate and respect the proposals of the *Making Mathematics Count* report (2004) from Professor Adrian Smith. The accreditation decisions taken by Ofqual have ensured that there are qualifications available, AQA Certificates in the Use of Mathematics, at both levels 1 and 2 of the National Qualification Framework to support progress to post-16 studies in mathematics in an applied context. These qualifications do not carry the GCSE title, for the reasons identified and explained in our letter of 15 March, but they do appear on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications.

AQA has approached us with a request for a change to the regulations for separate certificates at each of levels 1 and 2 to permit the qualification to operate in a similar way to GCSE. This we have accepted, again demonstrating our support for the qualifications and the recommendations of the *Making Mathematics Count* report. By these means these qualifications can be made available to all learners irrespective of age. It is for centres to ensure that the courses they provide to learners and the qualifications they enter them for are appropriate and meet the requirements laid down by the DCSF.

As you will be aware, these qualifications have been under development and review for a considerable period of time which started when Ofqual and QCDA were one organisation - QCA. You mention concerns about policy being undermined by regulations but I can assure you that colleagues in the DCSF have been aware of the progress of these qualifications throughout.

The actions taken by Ofqual demonstrate our keen support for learners of all ages and all pathways and our awareness of the importance of ensuring that qualifications accurately identify the course of study and assessment undertaken. I regret that ACME feels Ofqual has acted otherwise in this particular instance but hope that these further details provide some reassurance of our support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Opposs', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dennis Opposs
Director of Standards