



Dennis Opposs
Director of Standards
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry
CV5 6UB

1 March 2012

Dear Dennis,

I write to thank you for meeting with the ACME Secretariat in November 2011 and to summarise the discussions for future reference.

In light of the media coverage of commercial activities of awarding organisations I also enclose a copy of ACME's submission to the Education Select Committee inquiry *How should examinations for 15-19 year olds be run?*, which sets out our position regarding issues such as endorsement of textbooks by chief examiners. Given the current political interest in this area I have copied this letter to the Secretary of State for Education.

Transparency

ACME believes that the current practice of withholding information on the names of advisors used in the examination accreditation process runs counter to Ofqual's public confidence objective. Confidence in regulated qualifications relies on confidence in the regulation process, and transparency of operation is a key part of this. We do not believe that the mathematics community is unique in its concern, or that this should affect the principle of how Ofqual responds to this issue.

We were pleased to hear that Ofqual intends to review this policy as part of a wider evaluation of accreditation process. I would be grateful if you could write to confirm this as the mathematics community will be keen to hear that Ofqual is taking its concerns seriously.

Post-16 pathways and public understanding

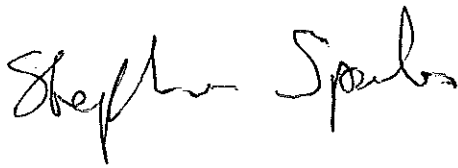
Following ACME's *Mathematical Needs* reports there is now a general move towards development of a wider range of post-16 qualifications in mathematics, particularly to suit those who achieve a grade C or higher in GCSE mathematics, but do not take A-level mathematics. ACME is undertaking a piece of work developing a set of options for new courses in post-16 mathematics. There is currently some discussion about how the intentions and benefits of the various 'pathways' can be communicated to the public and who should be responsible for this. ACME would be interested to hear what activities are currently being undertaken as part of Ofqual's awareness objective and whether these should include providing information on mathematical pathways as they are developed.

A-levels and ACME interaction with Ofqual

ACME would be pleased for you to attend a future committee meeting, particularly given Ofqual's work on A-level reforms and methods for interacting with the Higher Education sector.

Possible dates include 12 April (in Keele) or 3 May (in London), and I would be grateful if you would liaise with Rosalind Mist (rosalind.mist@royalsociety.org) regarding this. We would also like to consider a more regular informal interaction with you and perhaps one or two committee members to improve communications – if you agree that this would be helpful Rosalind would be pleased to arrange some mutually convenient dates.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Sparks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'S' at the beginning.

Professor Stephen Sparks FRS
Chair, Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education

Cc: Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education
Ian Brydon, Department for Education