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Professor Stephen Sparks FRS  
Chair, Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education  
The Royal Society  
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Dear Stephen

Thank you for your letter to Jacquie Spatcher received here on 29 March 2012 about the evaluation of the GCSE Mathematics Linked Pair (MLP) pilot. I am responding as I am the Deputy Director responsible for the pilot.

I should first of all let you know of some changes to the way we will be managing the pilot going forwards. We now have a single mathematics team led by Stefano Pozzi that will bring together all our work on the National Curriculum and GCSE reform, including policy leadership of the MLP pilot. This will ensure that the emerging evidence can feed directly into the work on GCSE reform. Nicola Edwards, who joined Stefano's team on 23 April, will be responsible for the pilot going forward and wants, as a priority, to get to know members of the Advisory Group and the next meeting is today (18 May).

I agree that it is important that the group should meet regularly to discuss the evidence coming through from the pilot and we will make sure that such meetings are scheduled into the project plans going forward. The second interim evaluation report; on which members have commented in draft, was published on 26 April and we sent you the link. The Group has also had the chance to see an early draft of the third interim evaluation report in advance of the meeting today. In addition, a meeting is scheduled with relevant ACME members and officials on the morning of 14 June to discuss the draft ACME paper by Roger Porkess.

I note your recommendation that the new single mathematics GCSE introduced in 2010 should be evaluated alongside the linked pair. The new GCSEs introduced from 2009 were the subject of an evaluation initiated by QCDA and completed last year. The final report is at [www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR203](http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR203). We have no plans to commission further research into GCSEs in individual subjects. The latest phase of the MLP pilot evaluation leading to the second interim report focussed on the appropriateness of the linked pair for different student groups and whether or not it provides value over and above the new-specification single GCSE in mathematics. We cannot fund an extension to

the scope of this project to look specifically at the single GCSE. However, we are keen to ensure that the learning from the current evaluation is maximised to inform the current reforms in a timely way.

Finally I just wanted to let you know that the Minister has decided to:

1. Extend the life of the MLP GCSE qualifications by two years. A further extension could be considered in due course depending on final decisions about roll-out of qualifications reform.
2. For new, non-pilot cohorts starting in September, make assessment of the pair linear.

I would of course be pleased to meet as you propose to explore these issues further and to discuss the Minister's decision, and Nicola Edwards will be in touch with Marie-Claude shortly to arrange a date.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Goldman', written in a cursive style.

Tom Goldman  
Deputy Director, GCSE Reform Division