



**Nick Gibb MP**  
Minister of State for School Reform

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*Dear Glenys*

24 November 2014

I wanted to thank you for the very useful discussion we had about the accreditation of maths GCSEs at the Ministerial Assurance Meeting. You explained the factors that give you confidence in your accreditation process and it was helpful to hear about the work that you have been doing to ensure that a robust process is in place.

You also helpfully outlined the steps you had taken to address the concern that some of the current sample assessment materials were not meeting our curriculum intentions for maths, and the more public concern about the comparability of specifications.

As you know our curriculum intention is that key stage 4 pupils can engage with the mechanics of maths, and also use that knowledge and understanding to solve mathematical problems. Employers and colleges have, for some time, raised concerns that they often receive students who are able to perform a calculation only when directed towards the mathematical calculation needed to do so. We want to see students able to solve mathematical problems without such direction and, as such, have a very strong interest in ensuring that Ofqual are robust in their expectations for real improvements in assessment materials, particularly on the reduction of scaffolded and bite-sized questions.

You explained that you have written to all of the awarding organisations to require changes to be made to ensure that you have confidence in the assessment of maths, and your colleagues have since confirmed that you are meeting with awarding organisations on 10 December to discuss these changes.


It is vital for the successful delivery of the new GCSEs that sample assessment materials closely mirror the live assessment materials students will face in summer 2017. If there are significant differences between the sample and live assessment materials, the risk is that students will be inadequately prepared for the new examinations.

It is also very important that schools receive a clear and accurate picture of how the maths GCSE is changing in time to allow them to adapt their teaching in advance of September 2015. Our understanding from schools is that sample assessment materials are critical to this picture. Schools should, therefore, be informed of the changes that are being made to sample assessment materials. Once aware that you are seeking changes, I am sure that they will want to press AOs for access to revised sample assessment materials as quickly as possible.

Making sure this information is available to schools is not only crucial in order to be fair to schools, but also to ensure that the scale of the government's ambition for the maths curriculum at Key Stage 4 is realised. Schools have a sense of the degree of change but are likely to think that important elements of the reform can be sidestepped if action is not taken to address the weaknesses in some specifications currently.

I would be very grateful if you could confirm to me that the changes you are requiring to the live assessment materials will be reflected in sample assessment materials as soon as possible, and what steps you will be taking to inform schools about these changes in time for them to prepare for first teaching in September 2015. Without such reassurances I remain serious concerned about the implications for the success of the government's qualification reforms with regard to maths.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Gibb'.

**Nick Gibb MP**