



Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Reform

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Professor Nigel Thrift
Chair,
A level Content Advisory Board
By email: Nigel.thrift@warwick.ac.uk
Cc: Isabel.nisbet@alcab.org.uk

18 December 2014

Dear Professor Thrift,

Thank you for your letter of 18 November, to the Secretary of State, providing ALCAB's recommendations for A level subject content in mathematics (and further mathematics), languages (modern and ancient) and geography. I am replying on her behalf, as minister of state responsible for these reforms.

I would like to convey my appreciation for ALCAB's valuable contribution to the development of our reforms to these qualifications, and would be grateful if you could pass on my thanks to the subject panels, in particular to the panel chairs. I am pleased that the consultation process has been so constructive in supporting the panels to develop high quality content. I share your desire to see that ALCAB's intentions for these subjects are carried through in practice, and I am therefore glad that you have been able to take account of the views of teachers and awarding organisations. I am also heartened by your comments on ALCAB's experience of strengthening the links between universities and awarding organisations. These links should help universities reinforce the knowledge and skills they expect to see in new undergraduates.

We are accepting your recommendations for subject content, and retaining the title for modern foreign languages. Our response to your recommendations and to the consultation is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/gcse-and-a-level-reform> and the final subject content is available here <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/gce-as-and-a-level-subject-content>

The new qualifications for these subjects will be first taught in September 2016, apart from mathematics and further mathematics. As you know, I have accepted your advice, and the advice of the Chief Regulator, to defer first teaching of the new mathematics and further mathematics A/AS levels until September 2017. This will give as many students as possible the opportunity

to benefit from the new qualifications at both GCSE and A level, and recognises the importance of mathematics as a route to a wide range of valuable higher education courses. The basis for this decision is explained more fully in my letter to the Chief Regulator of 1 December.

Thank you for highlighting the continuing role of the AS level. We are clear that it is right for students to have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of an uninterrupted programme of A level study, allowing them to acquire a depth of understanding which in general is not facilitated by modular courses. We also recognise that some students will want to take an AS level as part of their programme of study, and I am grateful for the panel's work in designing content which supports the co-teaching of AS and A level content.

I recognise that aspects of the reformed qualifications will make new demands on teachers, and we are encouraging them to prepare to meet these demands. This means acquiring new areas of knowledge, and understanding how to take full advantage of linear courses for the benefit of their students. Awarding organisations and subject associations are making available resources and guidance to support teachers in preparing for the improved qualifications, and we are encouraging teachers to make sure they obtain the support they need.

Once again, thank you very much for your advice and recommendations on these important qualifications.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Nick Gibb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "N" and "G".

Nick Gibb MP