



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State

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Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive
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Dear Glenys,

Development of GCSEs in England in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects is in train, with new qualifications in English and mathematics to be introduced for teaching from 2015, and remaining EBacc subjects to be introduced from 2016. Work is also underway to reform A Levels in 13 subjects for 2015 and in three further subject areas for 2016.

When I wrote to you last February to set out our policy steers for reformed GCSEs, I said that the Department would not be developing subject content for GCSEs beyond the EBacc subjects. Awarding organisations (AOs) and subject groups have the expertise in these subjects and are best placed to develop content which provide pupils, employers and further and higher education with respected qualifications in which they can have confidence. At A level, higher education institutions should have a greater role in the design and development of the qualifications.

In my letter to you of 6th February 2013, I said that I wanted to see as many GCSEs as possible introduced for first teaching by September 2016. I would also like to see a wide range of A levels reformed by this date. My officials have been working closely with yours and with AOs to consider the implications for delivery. I have considered carefully the appropriate balance between extending the reforms swiftly to a large group of subjects, and making sure that the system has the capacity to respond.

In the light of this work, I now look forward to the following subjects being introduced for first teaching from 2016:

- At GCSE: religious studies, design & technology, art and design, drama, dance, music, physical education, computer science and citizenship studies.
- At A Level: religious studies, design & technology, drama, dance, music and physical education.

My officials have confirmed with AOs that they will take the lead on developing subject content in these subjects. At GCSE, AOs will work with subject associations and other stakeholders to make sure that it is as rigorous and demanding as the content developed for reformed GCSEs in the EBacc subjects. At A level, the AOs will work with Higher Education and other subject experts to ensure that the reformed subject content provides students with the skills and knowledge needed to progress to undergraduate study. The Department will then host a consultation on the content proposed by the AOs. Following the consultation, I will consider recommendations for the final content from the AOs, and will confirm to you my response to those recommendations in order that the Ofqual Board can decide whether to adopt the content as the basis for regulation.

Ofqual is responsible for assessment arrangements for qualifications in these subjects. I recognise that the assessment arrangements will differ, reflecting the most appropriate and valid approach for each subject. It would be helpful if you could develop your assessment expectations to a similar timescale to the content development work to allow both sets of proposals to be consulted on publically at the same time.

Subject content for GCSEs and A Levels in remaining subjects can then be developed for first teaching from 2017 through the new regulatory framework which you will be consulting on.

I'm grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued work in improving standards and ensuring that pupils and schools are provided with the highest possible quality examinations.

I am copying this letter to Huw Lewis AM, John O'Dowd MLA, Graham Stuart MP and Sir Michael Wilshaw.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gove', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MICHAEL GOVE