



Rt Hon Anne Milton MP

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Functional Skills in English and maths are important qualifications that continue to be the main alternative to their GCSE counterparts. They play a vital role in supporting adults, apprentices and young people to acquire and accredit basic literacy and numeracy skills. In November 2015, the then Minister of State for Skills wrote to inform Ofqual of the decision to reform Functional Skills (FS) qualifications to ensure they better meet employers' needs and provide assurance of the knowledge and skills that learners achieve.

We have made good progress and I am committed to introducing these reformed qualifications for first teaching in September 2019. I will shortly be launching a formal consultation on updating the subject content for these qualifications and am writing to you to set out my policy steers on the next stages of their reform.

I know that you are reviewing your current regulatory arrangements for FS as part of the reform programme. Reformed FS qualifications will have multiple purposes. They need to provide reliable evidence of learners' achievements against demanding content that is relevant to the workplace. They also need to provide assessment of learners' underpinning knowledge as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts; and to provide a foundation for progression into further study or employment. When deciding your regulatory approach, you will want to take into account that, in some contexts, FS qualifications also play a part in the Government's accountability system.

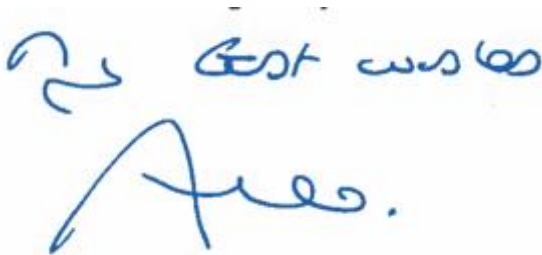
It is important that all users of the reformed qualifications have a clear understanding of their level of demand. I expect the qualifications to retain their focus on the knowledge and skills needed for everyday life and in the workplace; to see that the degree of challenge is appropriate to each level across the suite, from Entry level to levels 1 and 2; and for them to retain the

use of a pass-fail grading system. I would not expect the size of these qualifications to change significantly.

Employers and learners should have confidence that the level of qualification achieved is comparable irrespective of the awarding organisation they choose or the year in which exams are taken. You will need to consider how best to achieve this outcome while seeking to maintain the flexibility of availability that many learners and stakeholders value. I will be interested to understand how you intend to strike the balance between retaining this flexibility and introducing those controls necessary to maintain qualification standards over time.

Functional Skills should be 'employer-driven' qualifications. I recognise that there are always challenges with assessment, and that these will inevitably lead to some trade-offs. However, I would want to be assured that you have fully explored the best approach to assessing the skills employers have told us they need, and that we have set out in the subject content.

I would like to thank Ofqual for working closely with the Education and Training Foundation to progress this programme to reform Functional Skills. I look forward to working with you further to introduce these qualifications.



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