



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State

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Sally Collier
Chief Regulator
Ofqual
Spring Place
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10 September 2018

Dear Sally,

As you know, since 2011, management of national assessment arrangements has been the direct responsibility of the Department for Education, through the Standards and Testing Agency (STA).

You will be aware from discussions with officials that the Department recently signed a contract with Capita Business Services to deliver test operations services from the 2020 test cycle. The contract will start on 1 September this year, when a twelve-month set-up period will begin. Capita is contracted to deliver the service for the 2020 to 2024 test cycles inclusive, with an option for the STA to extend the contract by one test cycle.

The procurement of this new contract has been managed by my officials and overseen and quality-assured by the Crown Commercial Service. The School Standards Minister and I have been briefed as this procurement has progressed and we continue to have direct oversight of STA's operations.

Given the need to maintain public confidence in the statutory assessment system, STA officials are carrying out detailed planning and risk management. They and Capita will also be conducting robust end-to-end testing of new systems and processes during the set-up year.

Officials will be keeping me informed about progress and risk management throughout contract set up, the transition period and into operational delivery in 2020. I am pleased to confirm that we have external quality assurance of this in place; in particular, the procurement, set-up and transition processes are subject to scrutiny by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA), who reviewed the arrangements in April last year. We have asked the IPA to review them again this year and I expect them to have an ongoing quality assurance role, subject to their availability. In addition, the Government Internal Audit Agency intends to regularly review STA's contract set-up and transition

arrangements to ensure that all is on track for the new service to come into operation in 2020.

I trust that this information is useful and will aid you in your work as you continue to fulfil your statutory objectives to promote standards and public confidence in national assessment arrangements.

I am copying this to Roger Taylor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damian Hinds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a distinct 'H'.

Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education