



Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State

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Dear Glenys,

Thank you for your letter of 25 February about GCSE science practicals.

As you know, the opportunity to perform practicals is a crucial part of the teaching of science. Engaging in practicals makes science come alive for children and young people and can create a love for the subject, as well as enabling them to develop the skills they will need if they are to become scientists. Ensuring more young people continue to study science at A-level and university and go on to get jobs in Britain's thriving scientific sector is a vital part of our long-term economic plan. As you will know, getting more young women to study STEM subjects is also a particular priority of mine.

It is vital, therefore, that the qualification system supports practical science in schools. I am grateful to you for explaining the rationale behind your proposed approach. I can appreciate your reasoning and can see why schools which already have a strong commitment to practical science have welcomed the approach. Nonetheless, I continue to share the concerns of many in the science community that not having an assessment of practicals as part of the GCSE risks undermining the teaching of practicals in schools. It is important you take all possible steps to mitigate that risk.

I was pleased to read about your discussions with members of the science community; and in particular that SCORE will be engaged in developing the processes and procedures on how science practical activities will be reported and monitored. This monitoring needs to be effective, with suitable sanctions in place, to ensure that young people in all schools undertake a range of practical activities during their GCSE courses.

I would be grateful, therefore, for your commitment to continue to work with members of the science community as the arrangements develop and keep my officials informed of this work. I would like you to report to me on progress on this work before regulatory conditions and guidance are issued to exam boards.

I would also expect – as I am sure you are planning – arrangements to be put in place to evaluate the impact of the approach when it is implemented in schools: with a commitment to

revisit the decision if the evidence shows the approach to have had a detrimental effect.

Nicky Morgan

RT HON NICKY MORGAN MP