

Glenys Stacey
Chief Regulator



21 January 2015

Office of Qualifications
and Examinations Regulation
Spring Place
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Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Dear colleague,

Telephone 0300 303 3344
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You will be aware that new subject content and assessment objectives for GCSEs are being introduced for some subjects for first examination in summer 2017.

We have been working closely with exam boards over the past eighteen months to deliver the Government's policy aims for the revised qualifications. For GCSE maths, this means ensuring all students are more confident and competent in basic maths and to properly stretch more able students. Government, Ofqual and the exam boards are acutely aware of the importance of delivering public confidence in the new qualifications.

AQA, OCR, Pearson and WJEC Eduqas have now had their new maths specifications accredited by us. Each of the boards has issued initial sample assessment materials in support of their specifications, which you may have seen.

Accreditation is an important step in assessing the quality of the new qualifications across boards and includes independent review of materials by maths experts. It means we are confident that exam boards can meet our requirements going forward. To provide further confidence in the new exams, the sample assessment materials are being rigorously evaluated by us over the next three months through an extensive and robust research programme.

We have structured our research programme into three strands:

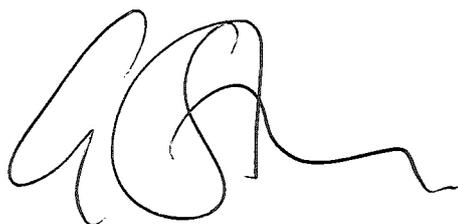
- Large-scale testing of sample exam papers on 4,000 students to evaluate the actual difficulty of questions. We will be seeking the help of schools to conduct this exercise;
- Research to understand further perceived difficulty of questions compared with those available internationally; and
- Evaluating the thought processes that students employ when attempting to answer a number of the questions.

Collectively, this research programme will provide the greatest possible confidence that each board's qualification will achieve the Government's aims.

The boards have agreed to delay the publication of further sample assessment materials until after the results of our research have been disseminated, in order that they might reflect the accumulated evidence. We will be maintaining a regular dialogue with the exam boards over this period.

Our research programme will be completed by the end of April. If necessary, Boards will then update their sample materials. None of this affects what is to be taught – the programme of study – as published by the Department for Education and the specifications that have been accredited. Therefore, this should not prevent you preparing for first teaching of the new qualifications from September. We will continue to provide you with regular progress updates over coming weeks. Further information on the research programme can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-maths-summary-of-research-programme>.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Stacey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Glenys Stacey
Chief Regulator