

Response - to

From: Jeremy Benson <Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk>
Sent: 06 September 2012 08:15
To: BEGOL, Hardip
Subject: RE: Response to

OK, thanks.

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson
Deputy Director, Policy, Ofqual

• Direct: [REDACTED] • Office: 0300 303 3344 • Mobile: [REDACTED]
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From: Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 05 September 2012 18:19
To: Jeremy Benson; [REDACTED] (DfE Official)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Response to

Jeremy, FYI responses we'll be sending to the unions - we've used the text in Ofqual's letter to Graham Stuart re: final report.

Hardip

From: Jeremy Benson [mailto:Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk]
Sent: 05 September 2012 17:59
To: BEGOL, Hardip; [REDACTED] (DfE Official)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Advance notice: PQ

We've nothing to add to this but will let you know if anything turns up.

Jeremy

Jeremy Benson
Deputy Director - Policy, Ofqual

• Direct: [REDACTED] • Office: 0300 303 3344 • Mobile: [REDACTED]

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From: Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk [mailto:Hardip.BEGOL@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 05 September 2012 14:53
To: Jeremy Benson; [REDACTED] (OfE Official)
Subject: RE: Advance notice: PQ

Sorry one more: phone briefing on GCSE results day as well.

Hardip

From: BEGOL, Hardip
Sent: 05 September 2012 14:47
To: Jeremy Benson (Jeremy.Benson@Ofqual.Gov.Uk); [REDACTED] (OfE Official)
Subject: Advance notice: PQ

PQ Number: 119943

Question: Hugh Bayley (York Central): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Oral Answer of 3 September 2012, Official Report, columns 8-9, on GCSEs, if he will place in the Library copies of all letters, emails, text messages and details of all telephone calls and meetings between Ofqual and Ministers in his Department in 2012 relating to the grade boundaries for GCSE English language. [119943].

Jeremy, [REDACTED] will want to double-check with you that we have everything captured.

At the moment we've think:

- *copy letter from Chief Regulator to NAHT
- *letter from Secretary of State to Chief Regulator and her reply
- *note of the phone briefing
- *copy of the report
- *copy of letter to Graham Stuart MP

plus administrative contact between the Offices of Secretary of State and Chief Regulator to make arrangements for phone briefing and receipt of a copy of the report. Are there other Ofqual letters a Minister has been copied into?

Hardip

Hardip Begol
Acting Director, Curriculum and General Qualifications Reform
Department for Education,
2nd Floor Sanctuary Buildings,

Russell Hobby
General Secretary
NAHT

Thank you for your letter of 24 August 2012 about concerns with the GCSE English qualifications; you wrote in similar terms to Glenys Stacey, the Chief Executive of the independent regulator Ofqual.

Ofqual responded to your letter on 25 August and published its initial report "*GCSE English Awards 2012: A Regulatory Report*" on 31 August. I am sure you will appreciate that it would have been inappropriate for me to respond to your request to instigate an independent enquiry whilst the regulator was undertaking its work.

As I made clear in the House of Commons on 3 September, Ofqual is an independent regulator accountable to Parliament. It would be unacceptable for me to interfere in the decisions of awarding organisations and Ofqual on the setting of grade boundaries.

I understand that Ofqual is continuing to meet your organisation to consider the evidence gathered and is now looking at why some schools got the results they expected and others did not. It will produce a final report in October.

The concerns in relation to GCSEs have confirmed my view that ending modular exams and tackling re-sits is the right approach; pupils starting new GCSEs this term will benefit from these changes. We also need to go further if we are to have qualifications that are comparable with the best in the world. Pupils and teachers who work hard are being let down by exams that do not equip them for the increasing competition we face. We will be consulting on these changes shortly.

Brian Lightman
General Secretary
ASCL

Thank you for your letter of 30 August 2012 about GCSE English qualifications.

You will now have seen Ofqual's initial report, *"GCSE English Awards 2012: A Regulatory Report"*, which was published on 31 August. The report considers the approach you propose to resolving concerns – using same grade boundaries in January and June - and concludes it is not justified by the evidence and would lead to very significant grade inflation at qualification level. As I made clear in the House of Commons on 3 September, Ofqual is an independent regulator accountable to Parliament. It would be inappropriate for me to interfere in the decisions of awarding organisations and Ofqual on the setting of grade boundaries.

I understand that Ofqual is continuing to meet your organisation to consider the evidence gathered and is now looking at why some schools got the results they expected and others did not. It will produce a final report in October.

The concerns in relation to GCSEs have confirmed my view that ending modular exams and tackling re-sits is the right approach; pupils starting new GCSEs this term will benefit from these changes. We also need to go further if we are to have qualifications that are comparable with the best in the world. Pupils and teachers who work hard are being let down by exams that do not equip them for the increasing competition we face. We will be consulting on these changes shortly and I welcome the support you set out in your letter for our drive to raise standards further and the Government's reforms in this area.

Christine Blower
General Secretary
National Union of Teachers

Thank you for your letter of 30 August about the grading of GCSEs, in particular English qualifications.

I agree that it is essential that grade boundaries are set by awarding organisations. This takes place under the arrangements governed by the independent regulator, Ofqual, which is accountable to Parliament. Setting grade boundaries should not be susceptible to politically motivated interference.

You will now have seen Ofqual's initial report, "*GCSE English Awards 2012: A Regulatory Report*", which was published on 31 August. It explains the role of Ofqual, the awarding process for English GCSEs in 2012 and confirms that:

"Ministers rightly take an interest in our work, which has a significant impact on the wider education system. But ministers have not attempted to influence our decisions on standards, results, grades or grade setting – and if they tried to do so, we would say publicly that they had done so. Their discussions with us have been appropriate and transparent." (page 32).

I understand that Ofqual is now looking at why some schools got the results they expected and others did not and will produce a final report in October.

