

Kathleen Tattersall
Chair



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Dear Ed,

LAUNCH OF OFQUAL

Following our meeting on 28 April I am writing to confirm my priorities for the first year of Ofqual. I am most grateful for the support which I have received from you and your Ministerial colleagues – and from Sir Anthony Greener and Ken Boston at QCA – which will enable Ofqual to establish a distinct and independent role from the outset, while operating within QCA's governance structure.

As you know, Ofqual is holding a launch event in the West Midlands on 16 May 2008. I am very pleased that Jim Knight will be able to join us for this event, and for the video message which has been sent by David Lammy.

Our first priority will be to establish Ofqual as a credible, authoritative and independent voice in the debate around standards, assessment and qualifications, as we maintain and develop the ongoing work of regulating qualifications and tests. Ofqual will work in a collaborative and open way, involving all stakeholders, including the regulatory authorities in Wales and Northern Ireland, and we shall seek to establish a reputation for evidence-based, expert and impartial work.

I welcome the Government's commitment to legislate to establish Ofqual as an independent regulator. As I said at our meeting, I very much hope that the new legislation will be enacted at as early a date as possible and that it will give Ofqual more effective powers than are currently available to QCA as regulator. Ofqual will give priority to making sure that all the preparatory steps are taken to establish the independent regulatory authority ready for the enactment of the legislation.

We have discussed the key issues which may arise during the forthcoming summer round of examinations and National Curriculum Assessments. I see Ofqual as having a key role in informing and shaping public understanding over that period.



As I announced on 16 May, Ofqual will be setting in hand a study of the reliability of results of national examinations and tests, involving both empirical and policy work, to inform the development of our thinking on how we can develop our regulatory approach. We shall shortly appoint an expert panel to oversee the work. We shall consider reliability in both external assessment and teacher assessment. We also intend to structure a public debate around those issues in parallel with the technical work, engaging a wide range of stakeholders. I am grateful to you for agreeing additional funding for the costs of this exercise that fall in 2008-09.

You and John Denham have remitted QCA to undertake some specific work in 2008-09 on the efficiency of the qualifications market and on the reasonableness of fees charged for a range of qualifications. This will be the responsibility of Ofqual and I commit the organisation to delivering those remits. We both recognise that Ofqual is independent of Government, and is not part of the delivery chain for the Government's proposals for reform. However, I accept that Ofqual has an important role in making sure that there is a suitable framework for regulating new or changed arrangements, following Government-led reforms. In particular, Ofqual will give priority to ensuring that secure regulatory arrangements are in place for the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), new 14-19 qualifications and for National Curriculum and early years assessments.

QCA and DCSF have agreed funding for Ofqual in 2008-09, covering the core costs of the continuing programmes of regulatory work, the costs of specific new remits and the additional costs to QCA arising from the establishment of Ofqual. I have given you my commitment to use that funding efficiently and to manage our resources prudently. I shall, however, review in mid-year whether additional resources may be required to deliver the degree of visibility and influence that you and all our stakeholders expect of us.

Finally, our officials are keeping yours fully apprised of the work which we are doing to prepare for Ofqual becoming a fully independent, statutory body and to make sure we have the resources, skills and capacity to deliver the critical tasks ahead.

The Ofqual Committee has now had its first meeting and it will provide strong strategic leadership to Ofqual's management team over the year ahead. We look forward to continue close but independent working with your officials and those in DIUS.

I am copying this letter to John Denham, Barry Sheerman and Sir Anthony Greener.

Yours sincerely,
Kathleen

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