

Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
Bangor  
BT19 7PR

15 November 2016

Dear Principal

### **GCSE GRADING – GCSEs OFFERED BY WJEC**

On 28 June 2016 the Minister for Education announced a number of changes affecting the GCSE offer to schools in Northern Ireland.

While asking CCEA Awarding Organisation to retain the use of alphabetic grading, in order to ensure that our pupils have the same range of opportunities as other pupils in the UK regarding applications to colleges, universities and employment, the Minister announced two significant changes.

Firstly, he asked CCEA to realign the A\* as a mark of outstanding achievement, thereby restoring the value of the A as a high-level achievement within the reach of our most able learners.

Secondly, given that England has already proposed that its new grade 5 will become the benchmark measure for attainment at Key Stage 4 and is higher than the Grade C, the Minister also asked CCEA to identify a new reference point on the grading scale to equate to the grade 5. This will be referred to as a C\*.

The recalibrated A\* will provide parity with the Grade 9 in England and the new C\* will achieve the same at Grade 5.

Revised CCEA GCSE qualifications will be available for first teaching from September 2017 and CCEA Regulation is currently undertaking detailed technical work on how the new grading arrangements will apply. Further detail on the regulatory rules for CCEA GCSE awarding from summer 2019 will be provided in advance of first teaching of the revised specifications.

The Minister's decision on alignment of the CCEA A\* Grade with the Grade 9 awarded in England and the introduction of the C\* Grade aligned to the Grade 5 in England, has implications in terms of the acceptability of GCSEs offered by WJEC within the Minister's policy. Qualifications Wales (the Qualifications Regulator in Wales) has indicated that grading used by WJEC will continue to be A\* to G. However, the WJEC grading will not include a C\* Grade or revised A\* awarding.

This means that from summer 2019 (when the revised CCEA GCSEs are first awarded) there will be a discontinuity with WJEC grades. **Consequently the Minister has decided that GCSEs offered by WJEC in A\* to G formats, as required by Qualifications Wales, should no longer be available in Northern Ireland from September 2017 (first teaching).**

However, WJEC offers GCSEs in England under the Eduqas banner, which are regulated by Ofqual and meet its regulatory conditions. This includes the use of numeric grading. **WJEC Eduqas GCSEs can continue to be available here as the grading system will be the same as that used by the English based GCSE Awarding Organisations.**

**WJEC GCSE courses that have already commenced can continue, with final awarding taking place in summer 2018. No**

**new WJEC A\* to G GCSE courses should be commenced in  
September 2017.**

AS and A level qualifications offered by WJEC continue to be available  
for use in schools here.

I have advised WJEC, CCEA Regulation and the relevant Government  
Departments and Qualifications Regulators in England and Wales of  
the Minister's decision.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long tail on the 'g'.

**DAVID HUGHES (Dr)  
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM QUALIFICATIONS & STANDARDS**