

Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive



16 December 2011

Mr Nick Mair
Chairman
ISMLA
Dulwich College
Dulwich Common
London, SE21 7LD

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

Telephone 0300 303 3344
Textphone 0300 303 3345
info@ofqual.gov.uk
www.ofqual.gov.uk

Dear Nick

I was grateful for the chance to come to Dulwich College on 23 November with Dennis Opposs and talk to you and colleagues from the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA) and the Association of Language Learners (ALL) about standards issues related to GCSEs and A levels in modern foreign languages.

As I said at the time, the Ofqual Board is presently in the process of agreeing our strategic plan. In prioritising work, we have to ensure that we match our limited resources to the Board's priorities.

One area that we expect the Board to prioritise is minimising grade inflation. We have had some success there during the introduction of the new A levels. We intend to use the same approach for the new GCSEs. However, we appreciate that the approach being adopted needs to be tempered with a chance to review after it has run for a short time and to make changes to the historical position where necessary. In introducing such a change mechanism, we can see that there would be strong reasons for first using it with GCSEs in modern foreign languages. Before considering any changes though we would need to develop a suitably robust mechanism. All that means that we have no plans to make any changes to grade standards in GCSEs in modern foreign languages in the immediate future.

At A level we discussed with you the evidence we have from modelling work carried out on the previous specifications that showed that grade A candidates in modern foreign languages tended to score a greater proportion of their marks at AS than grade A candidates in other subjects.



If this trend has continued into the new specifications, it could go some way to explain why the proportion of A* grades in modern foreign languages appears to be slightly lower than other subjects with a similar proportion of candidates at grade A. We will be considering with the awarding organisations whether this effect has continued in the new specifications.

We also intend to raise with them your concerns that grading in orals (and other units in modern foreign language examinations) is unpredictable - schools claiming that the rank orders of their students are wrong.

As soon as we have findings from these pieces of work, we will be back in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Glenys Stacey', written in a cursive style.

Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive

Direct Line: 02476 716741