

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP
Minister of State for School Standards
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
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25 July 2017

Dear Mr Gibb

Professor Sir Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics

The Royal Statistical Society strongly welcomes the publication of the report of Professor Sir Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics. The commissioning of the Review by the Government was timely and necessary, given the increasing importance of mathematical and statistical skills in our everyday lives, in employment and in society, with data and algorithms increasingly pervasive.

We support Sir Adrian's recommendations, which advocate a range of pathways (including A level and AS level Mathematics and Further Mathematics, A level and AS level Statistics, Core Maths, and Functional Skills) post-16, and seek to tackle gender, ethnicity, geographic and social imbalance. We support the recommendations calling for the Government, and your department in particular, to lead on building a greater evidence base on mathematics teaching in FE, on the role of technology in teaching, and in attitudes to mathematics. We look forward to working with our fellow learned societies on encouraging universities to better signal the quantitative skills they require. We also agree with Sir Adrian's ambition for universal 16-18 mathematics.

We are encouraged by the Government's response, which begins to address several of the Review's recommendations. We look forward to seeing the plans which you will set out "in due course". To ensure that all stakeholders, from business, academia and education, are ready to respond to them, we would be grateful if you could provide a timetable of when these plans will be published.

To help with your considerations, we wish to share the following comments:

- We share the Royal Society's concern about the recruitment, retention, and training of our teachers. We echo the Royal Society's priority call for the Department to continue supporting the number of new teachers and to improve teacher retention.
- Sir Adrian's sixth recommendation referred to "urgent" changes to the funding model for schools, which your letter to him of 20 July did not respond to. We hope that this will be given urgent attention when Parliament resumes. We would like to draw attention to the Academy of Social Science's statement on the Review, which highlighted the value of AS level Mathematics. In addressing the funding challenges for Core Maths and Further Mathematics that Sir Adrian highlights, the DfE has an opportunity to ensure that schools can offer a full range of mathematical pathways for students, including AS level mathematics, Core Maths, AS level further mathematics, and indeed, A or AS level Statistics.



- We welcome the recommendation to reconsider the GCSE resit policy. We would be delighted if you committed yourself to providing a date by which the Department will either confirm that the current policy remains in place for 2017/18, or will be changed.

Finally, we are pleased to see Sir Adrian discussing the future role of 'big data' and data science in his report. We support his recommendation to DfE and BEIS for a study into the long-term implications of data science on future skills needs and the implications for education and training. Our Society has been exploring these issues for some time, with recent activity including a conference with the Royal Society on the skills needs of data analytics, and the launch of our Data Science Section. If we could be of assistance in developing the thinking for this study, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you.

Yours sincerely



Hetan Shah
Executive Director